Expeditionary Culture Field Guide

SENEGAL

U.S. AIR FORCE

About this Guide

This guide is designed to prepare you to deploy to culturally complex environments and achieve mission objectives. The fundamental information contained within will help you understand the cultural dimension of your assigned location and gain skills necessary for success (Photo a courtesy of the United Nations).

The guide consists of 2 parts:

Part 1: Introduces "Culture General," the foundational knowledge you need to operate effectively in any global environment.

Part 2: Presents "Culture Specific" Senegal, focusing on unique cultural features of Senegalese society and is designed to complement other pre-deployment training. It applies culture-general concepts to help increase your knowledge of your assigned deployment location.

For further information, visit the Air Force Culture and Language Center (AFCLC) website at http://culture.af.mil/ or contact AFCLC's Region Team at AFCLC.Region@us.af.mil.

PART 1 – CULTURE GENERAL

What is Culture?

Fundamental to all aspects of human existence, culture shapes the way humans view life and functions as a tool we use to adapt to our social and physical environments. A culture is the sum of all of the beliefs, values, behaviors, and symbols that have meaning for a society. All human beings have culture, and individuals within a culture share a general set of beliefs and values.

Members of a culture also usually assign the same meanings to the symbols in that culture. A symbol is when one thing – an image, word, object, idea, or story – represents another thing. For example, the American flag is a physical and visual symbol of a core American value – freedom. At the same time, the story of George Washington admitting to having chopped down a cherry tree is also symbolic, representing the importance Americans place on personal honesty and leadership integrity.

Force Multiplier

The military services have learned through experience the importance of understanding other cultures. Unlike the 20th-century bipolar world order that dominated US strategy for nearly half a century, today the US military is operating in what we classify as asymmetric or irregular conflict zones where the notion of cross-cultural interactions is on the leading edge of our engagement strategies.

We have come to view the people themselves, rather than the political system or physical environment, as the decisive feature in conflict areas. Our primary objective hinges on influencing constructive change through peaceful means where possible. We achieve this endeavor by encouraging local

nationals to focus on developing stable political, social, and economic institutions that reflect their cultural beliefs and traditions.

Therefore, understanding the basic concepts of culture serves as a force multiplier. Achieving an awareness and respect of a society's values and beliefs enables deploying forces to build relationships with people from other cultures, positively influence their actions, and ultimately achieve mission success.

Cultural Domains

Culture is not just represented by the beliefs we carry internally, but also by our behaviors and by the systems members of a culture create to organize their lives. These systems, such as political or educational institutions, help us to live in a manner that is appropriate to our culture and encourages us to perpetuate that culture into the future.

We can organize these behaviors and systems into categories – what the Air Force refers to as "cultural domains" – in order to better understand the primary values and characteristics of a society. A cross-culturally competent military member can use these domains – which include kinship, language and communication, and social and political systems among others (see chart on next page) – as tools for understanding and adapting to any culture. For example, by understanding the ways different cultures define family or kinship, a deployed military member can more effectively interact with members of that culture.

Social Behaviors Across Cultures

While humankind shares basic behaviors, various groups enact or even group those behaviors differently across cultural boundaries. For example, all societies obtain food for survival, although agrarian societies generally produce their own food for limited consumption using very basic techniques.

Conversely, industrialized nations have more sophisticated

market economies, producing foodstuffs for universal consumption. Likewise, all cultures value history and tradition, although they represent these concepts through a variety of unique forms of symbolism. While the dominant world religions share the belief in one God, their worship practices vary with their traditional historical development. Similarly, in many kin-based cultures where familial bonds are foundational to social identity, it is customary for family or friends to serve as godparents, while for other societies this practice is nearly non-existent.

Worldview

One of our basic human behaviors is the tendency to classify others as similar or different according to our cultural standard.

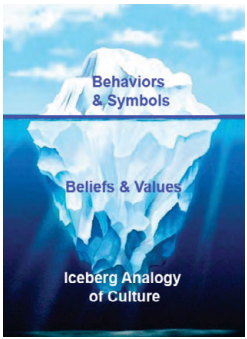
As depicted in the chart below, we can apply the 12 cultural domains to help us compare similarities and differences across cultures. We evaluate others' behavior to determine if they are "people like me" or "people not like me." Consequently, we assume that individuals falling into the "like me" category share our perspectives and values.

This collective perspective forms our worldview– how we see the world and understand our place in it. Your worldview functions as a lens through which you see and understand the world. It helps you to interpret your experiences and the values and behaviors of other people that you encounter. Consider your worldview as a way of framing behavior, providing an accountability standard for our actions and a logical explanation of why we individually or collectively act in a certain manner.

Cultural Belief System

An important component of a worldview is our belief system. A community's belief system sets its universal standards of what is good and bad, defines right and wrong behavior, and assigns a value of meaningful or meaningless. Our beliefs form the fundamental values we hold to be true – regardless of whether there is physical evidence to support these ideas. Beliefs are a central facet of human culture. They are shared views about world order and how the universe was physically and socially constructed.

While all people have beliefs, their specific components tend to vary depending upon respective world views. What people classify as good or bad, right or wrong depends on our deeply-held beliefs we started developing early in life that have help shape our characters. Likewise, these values are ingrained in our personalities and shape our behavior patterns and our self-identities. Because cultural beliefs are intensely held, they are difficult, though not impossible, to change.



Core Beliefs

Core beliefs shape and influence certain behaviors and also serve to rationalize those behaviors. Therefore, knowledge of individual or group beliefs can be useful in comprehending or making sense of their activities. We will use the iceberg model for classifying culture to illustrate two levels of meaning, as depicted. Beliefs and values, portrayed by the

deeper and greater level of the submerged iceberg, are seldom visible, but are indicated / hinted at / referenced by our behaviors and symbols (top level). It is important to recognize, though, that the parts of culture that are not visible (under the waterline) are informing and shaping what is being made visible (above the waterline).

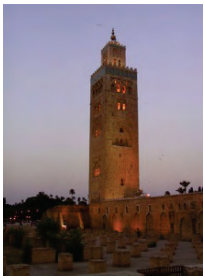
In many cases, different worldviews may present behaviors that are contrary to our own beliefs, particularly in many regions where US forces deploy. Your ability to suspend judgment in order to understand another perspective is essential to establishing relationships with your host-nation counterparts. The ability to withhold your opinion and strive to understand a culture from a member of that culture's perspective is known as cultural relativism. It often involves taking an alternate perspective when interpreting others' behaviors and is critical to your ability to achieve mission success.

As you travel throughout the African Continent, you will encounter cultural patterns of meaning that are common among most African countries. What follows is a general description of 12 cultural domains which are used to frame those commonalities.

CULTURAL DOMAINS

1. History and Myth

History and myth are related concepts. History is a record of the past that is based on verifiable facts and events. Myth can act as a type of historical record, although it is usually a story which members of a culture use to explain community origins or important events that are not verifiable or which occurred prior to written language.



Africa has a history that spans the entire existence of humankind. In ancient times prior to the emergence of written languages, history and wisdom were preserved across generations and

ethnic boundaries through oral folk legends or myths. Most early human evolution began as hunting and gathering cultures in East and South Africa, with countries such as Ethiopia, Kenya, Tanzania, and South Africa renowned for their early human sites. In the last several millennia, the development of agriculture and pastoralism (animal herding) replaced hunting and gathering lifestyles (Photo: *Kutubiyya Mosque* courtesy of CultureGrams, ProQuest, 2013).

Ancient civilizations evolved in all corners of Africa, inspired in part by peoples from the Middle East bringing trade, beliefs, customs, language, and on occasion, colonization. Far from being isolated empires, the African civilizations were intimately connected by commerce and marriage throughout various regions of the continent, and when confronted by outsiders, managed to adapt to their influences. Eventually, Arab traders introduced Islam to Africa and also instituted the Trans-Saharan African slave trade that lasted from the 7th to 19th Centuries.

The “golden age” of European exploration, which lasted from the 18th to mid-20th century, prompted the wholesale exploitation of Africans resources – first human assets through slavery, followed by natural resources such as minerals, precious gems and metals, and wildlife, thereby diminishing most of what was traditional and African.

The introduction of the European Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade altered the slave trade through both the sheer number of Africans enslaved and through the cementing of a racist ideology of Black inferiority to legitimize the institution of slavery. Slavery decimated the African continent for over 400 years through the forced relocation of an estimated 25 to 30 million Africans worldwide. This figure does not include those Africans who died aboard ships or during capture. While abolition of the slave trade dissolved the institution of slavery, it did not end the European

CULTURE GENERAL

presence on the African continent nor did it drastically alter their attitudes towards Africans.

Starting in the mid-19th century, European colonialism served to redefine African ethnic relations on a large scale; however, as African societies began to resist colonial rule and seek their independence, widespread ethnic conflict and genocide occurred. Sustained westernization and globalization continue to shape the continent through poverty, disease, and social reform. A history still to be recorded, Africa's future identity faces many challenges in critical areas such as environmental change, ethnic strife, women's health and security, and education.

2. Political and Social Relations

Political relations are the ways in which members of a community organize leadership, power, and authority. Social relations are all of the ways in which individuals are linked to others in their community. Traditional African political organizations in the form of bands, tribes, and chiefdoms have existed for several millennia and continue to influence contemporary African governments. Uncommon in modern society, bands are limited to hunting and gathering economies, such as the ǃKung of the southern African Kalahari Desert and foragers of central African forests.

Tribes are still represented today across the African political landscape, although the use of the word "tribe" is sometimes misinterpreted due to its western notion of "primitiveness" and oftentimes substituted with the term "ethnic group." Lacking centralized authority, tribes are organized around segmented descent groups or in some cases age groups.

Everyday governance is discharged through councils of respected elders and sanctioned through ritual and other means. East African pastoralist groups such as the Maasai,

along with some West African tribes and the Berbers in North Africa, represent this type of organization.

Chiefdoms or kingdoms are ruled by kings or queens from a royal clan and generally incorporate millions of subjects. Kingdoms such as the Zulu or Swazi in southern Africa developed through conquest, while others like Ghana's Ashante developed through an association of related traditional states. However, colonialism eventually diluted the power and reach of these empires, whose leaders were often retained as indirect rulers or figureheads.

Today, all three of these political organizations still exist, although in the confines of modern African nation-states created by colonial powers who had little regard or understanding of African cultures. This juxtaposition of modernity with tradition has caused severe conflict throughout the continent.

Challenged to construct their respective "national" identities, regional leaders attempt to do so by diluting the traditionally cohesive power of ancestry. These national ruling elites, who derive their power from wealth and commerce rather than tribal affiliation, feel threatened by loyalty to these traditional organizations, labeling their rule as "tribalism."

This "class versus descent" scrimmage for power has resulted in conflicts across the continent and a dramatic divergence of interests. As a means to overcome these and other issues on the continent, a 53-nation federation, the African Union (AU), was formed in 2002. AU's charter is to promote "greater unity and solidarity between African countries and peoples" by building partnerships in all segments of "civil society."

3. Religion and Spirituality

Religion is a cultural belief system that provides meaning to members of a community. Religious and spiritual beliefs help preserve the social order by defining proper behavior. They also create social unity by defining shared identity, offer

individuals peace of mind, and explain the causes of events in a society. Prior to the arrival of Islam and Christianity, the African continent consisted of orally transmitted indigenous religious practices. As in many societies, African indigenous beliefs influenced diet, subsistence patterns, family structures, marriage practices, and healing and burial processes. In essence, Africans constructed their worldview through their indigenous religions.

Today, the African continent is primarily either Muslim or Christian. Other faiths such as Judaism and Hinduism exist as pockets in different regions of the continent, primarily in urban areas. The historical trajectories of Islamic and Christian expansion in Africa offer intriguing commonalities in how Africans across the continent initially reacted to the introduction of each of those religions. For example, it is common throughout the continent to find a blending of many elements of indigenous religious practices with local Islam and Christianity (Photo courtesy of Wikimedia).

Consequently, many African native religions share similarities with religions such as Christianity, Islam, and Judaism in their understanding of God as the creator and ruler of all life, although He is considered untouchable by humans.

However, unlike Christianity and Islam, many African indigenous religions believe that God is not directly involved in people's lives. To them there is a spirit world populated with former good and bad human beings. The good spirits intercede with God on behalf of their living families to whom they then relay God's will through dreams and acquired possessions. The bad spirits work to bring misfortune through sickness,

death, or natural disasters to those who behave inappropriately.

Many indigenous African religions revere "nature" spirits living in the sky, water, and forests. These impersonal spirits help protect people from harm and provide them with life's essential ingredients such as water, sun, and wildlife. This belief system is commonly referred to as animism.

Just as spirits mediate relations between God and humans, religious specialists act as mediators between spirits and humans to provide protection from harm.

4. Family and Kinship

The domain of family and kinship refers to groups of people related through blood ties, marriage, or through strong emotional bonds that influence them to treat each other like family members (often called "fictive kin").The traditional African family with respect to marriage, family structure, and descent is a much different arrangement than is found in most American families. Likewise, there are several components of the traditional African family that are common to all African cultures.

First, perhaps the most difficult feature to reconcile to Americans is that of polygyny – the practice of a husband having more than one wife. A benefit of this arrangement is that it promotes societal alliances through marriage, procreation, and family wealth through female labor.

Second, due to polygyny, the family in most African cultures has historically consisted of an expanded set of kin or relatives that extends well beyond the American notion of a nuclear family. This arrangement created a family environment where children considered all siblings as "brothers and sisters" and all of the wives/mothers as "mother."

Third, the extended African family traces descent through either the male or female side of the family, a practice which differs considerably from the American family. Patrilineal descent (through the male side of the family) is the more common approach and usually features polygyny. The matrilineal (through the female bloodline) marriage pattern is more uncommon and almost always features monogamy – it is rare to encounter a wife having more than one husband.

Lastly, it is common for two or more blood lines (lineages) to share a common ancestor and collectively form a clan, which is the largest social unit. Clans do not have formal leaders or organizational structures. Membership is transferred from father to child and cuts across ethnic and social boundaries.

The dramatic social changes in Africa during and after colonialism in the last 4 decades have obviously affected the traditional family, and variations on these 3 features can be found across the continent.

5. Sex and Gender

Sex refers to the biological/reproductive differences between males and females, while gender is a more flexible concept that refers to a culture's categorizing of masculine and feminine behaviors, symbols, and social roles. Gender roles in Africa follow no single model nor is there a generalized concept of sex and common standard of sexual behavior.

Prehistorically, gender role differentiation in Africa's hunting and gathering cultures was based on a division of labor featuring different, yet complementary, sets of responsibilities for males and females, adults and children. Females gathered over half the caloric needs from natural vegetation, while also reproducing and raising offspring. Males were primarily hunters but also assisted with gathering.

These gender patterns continued as agricultural practices advanced.

Females shared in farming while continuing to provide for the family's subsistence, and males produced the cash crops. Pastoralists like the Maasai of Kenya traditionally have featured males involved in cattle-raising and females in food production.

The 19th-century European colonial period introduced a cash economy into Africa, with female labor used to produce the cash crops. By inserting male authority over females, colonial administrators disrupted the distinct yet complementary male/female relationship that had been traditionally African.

More recently, western influence across the continent has dramatically altered the traditional gender roles. Educational and professional opportunities for females, along with increased family migrations to urban areas, have radically altered traditional male and female gender roles.

Likewise, the number of singles parents and even child- or other relative-led families has increased with the predominance of HIV/AIDS-related deaths and warfare, further altering traditional gender responsibilities. Additionally, ethnic conflicts involving abuse of women are prevalent in many unstable countries, and while the rubric of traditional African gender generally remains, the forces of change are gradually ripping it away.

6. Language and Communication

Language is a system for sharing information symbolically, whereby words are used to represent ideas. Communication is defined as the cultural practice of sharing meaning in interaction, both verbally and non-verbally. America is predominantly a monolingual society, where traditionally, fluency in a second language has been considered a luxury rather than a necessity. Conversely, national survival for many societies in Africa required them throughout their existence to adopt multilingual

practices, if for no other reason than to preserve their native heritage.

You may find it challenging to comprehend the scope of Africa's linguistic diversity. There are over 2,000 African languages (many spoken-only) from 6 major language families, and perhaps 100 of these languages are used to communicate among the more dominant ethnic groups such as Berber, Swahili, Yoruba, and others.

Official languages of African nation-states are few, yet the linguistic diversity expressed across the continent (Nigeria has 250 languages) has prompted an awareness of the value of Africa's linguistic traditions. While most areas of the continent speak the adopted language of their colonial past – such as French and Portuguese in West Africa, French and Arabic in Morocco, and English in Kenya and South Africa – the majority of people also speak one or more traditional "indigenous" languages of their and other ethnic groups. As African independence spread throughout the continent, ethnic groups continued to depend on their indigenous identifiers, such as language, to celebrate their "release" from colonial rule and to preserve a sense of indigenous identity.

While communication styles tend to vary by ethnic or social groups, Africans generally are friendly and outgoing people although they tend to communicate with reserve to avoid confrontation. As in most kin-based societies, Africans believe that saving face or protecting one's honor and dignity are of utmost importance; therefore, they avoid public criticism and controversial topics at all costs – even to the extent of withholding their honest opinion or modifying the truth.

Africans admire and even expect extended greetings and small talk, and to attempt to rush or avoid social graces is considered disrespectful. Similarly, Africans avoid direct eye contact when communicating with new acquaintances and people of status,

particularly elders. They also are fond of non-verbal gestures, and it is common throughout African societies for members of the same gender to hold hands or touch while conversing.

7. Learning and Knowledge

All cultures require that the older generation transmit important information to the younger generation. This information can be strictly factual (for example, how to fulfill subsistence and health requirements) and culturally traditional (the beliefs, behaviors, and symbols that have meaning to the community). This knowledge transfer may occur through structured, formalized systems such as schools or through informal learning by watching adults or peers.

The contemporary African educational system hardly resembles the traditional pre-colonial structure, whereby community elders were primarily responsible for preparing youth for adulthood. Their instruction included fundamentals of ethnic ritual and ceremony, along with customary protocol for their distinctive gender roles. A rite-of-passage commemorating their successful journey from childhood to adulthood served as a form of graduation.

European colonialism brought a more structured, formal educational system that catered to a small group of African elite who demonstrated potential to administer expanding colonial territories. Following independence, many African nations adopted the European system because they believed it would prepare them to be more competitive in intra-continental and global marketplaces, thereby enhancing their quality of life.

However, progress in developing and maintaining reliable educational institutions has been slow for a variety of reasons. Since most Africans live in rural environments, they continue to rely heavily on child labor for family survival, resulting in decreased school enrollments or early withdrawals. Likewise, widespread HIV/AIDS epidemics, ethnic conflict, teacher and resource deficits, and inaccessibility to remote rural areas also hamper progress. According to 2005 statistics, only half of the

continent's children were enrolled in primary school, leaving over 40 million African children without any schooling at all.

8. Time and Space

In every society, people occupy space and time in ways that are not directly linked to physical survival. In low-context western cultures, people tend to be preoccupied with strict time management, devoting less effort to relationship-building. Conversely, most African cultures are traditionally high-context societies, whereby people center their activities on socializing and establishing close associations, having little regard for the passage-of-time.

Only after establishing trust and honor will your typical African counterpart agreeably proceed with business. In his worldview, time is a precious commodity used to establish relationships and form alliances. Any attempt to accelerate the tempo at the expense of social pleasantries will likely result in deadlock.

To an African, close physical proximity between individuals encourages cooperative trust, and for centuries they have viewed human linkage as a core element to survival. This closeness is best represented in a traditional African village where strong kinship connections are evidenced by a display of close interpersonal relations among family members.

While conventional African concepts of time and space remain intact, throughout the continent western influence and globalization have stepped up the pace of African living, mostly in urban areas. Consequently, rural-to-urban migrations have reshaped traditional social and subsistence patterns.

9. Aesthetics and Recreation

Every culture has its own forms of creative expression that are guided by aesthetic principles of imagination, beauty, skill and style. Prior to 19th-century European colonization of Africa,

recreation served a vital subsistence role, whereby adolescents and adults alike participated in intellectually stimulating leisurely activities that concurrently served to develop essential hunting and pastoral skills.

Games of chance and skill were important to early childhood development, providing social outlets within and outside their community. Featuring wrestling, jumping and running; traditional African sport was steeped in religious ritual.

Along with colonialism came the introduction to Africa of western sports such as soccer, cricket, rugby and track and field. This emphasis on western sport continued to thrive with African independence and globalization, as seen in sporting events such as the Olympics and the World Cup.

Leaders such as Nelson Mandela skillfully employed sport to promote a unified South African nation. Importing the predominantly "white" game of rugby, Mandela used it to fuse a racially divided country following his election in 1992. This event is the theme of the motion picture "Invictus," exemplifying how sport can serve to create national identities and overcome ethnic division. His efforts have inspired many other African nations to follow suit.

Likewise, East African countries such as Kenya and Ethiopia have produced the world's dominant male and female distance runners, and South Africa, Cameroon and Nigeria emerged as strong contenders in the 2010 World Cup. African nations are now competing in leagues such as the International Basketball Association (FIBA) World Championships, and there is also a

growing number of African basketball players on US college campuses and in the National Basketball Association (NBA).

10. Sustenance and Health

Societies have different methods of transforming natural resources into food. These methods can shape residence patterns, family structures and economics. Theories of disease and healing practices exist in all cultures and serve as adaptive responses to disease and illness.

Despite having only 11% of the global population, Africa is a victim of many of the world's debilitating health disorders. According to the World Health Organization, 60% of the global HIV/AIDS cases and 90% of malarial diseases occur in Africa.

These and other medical conditions are attributed primarily to viral infection and widespread poverty caused by extreme climatic conditions and civil unrest, coupled with inadequate preventative measures. While extensive drought generates widespread famine, civil disturbances generate millions of displaced persons. Likewise, with only 58% of the Sub-Saharan African population having access to safe drinking water, water-born bacterial diseases such as cholera and schistosomiasis are common.

Many people in Africa lack access to western medicine, and as a result depend on traditional health practices to combat disease. In addition, some traditional beliefs run counter to western medical practice and perhaps discourage individuals from utilizing those services even when they are available. This problem is further intensified by lack of federal regulatory healthcare management.

While modern healthcare procedures are more common in urban areas, many rural people rely on traditional practitioners who use a variety of plants and herbs to treat patients. Similarly, many families have their own secret remedies. While in some cases traditional medicine proves effective with fewer side effects than modern drugs, traditional practices do not adequately treat many of the more serious conditions.

On a positive note, western influence has stimulated some progress in combating Africa's health crisis. More resources are devoted to achieving basic human security by assessing disease symptoms early and with scientific accuracy.

11. Economics and Resources

This domain refers to beliefs regarding appropriate ways for a society to produce, distribute, and consume goods and services. Traditionally having an agrarian-based economy, Africa today remains predominantly agricultural, featuring less industrialization than most other parts of the world. Post-colonial adversities such as civil war, disease, poverty, and unstable dictatorships posed unusual hardship on several young African nations; however, Africa currently stands at the cross-roads of economic development with many nations becoming some of fastest growing regions in the world.

Colonialism institutionalized the exploitation of Africa's mineral resources, resulting in today's oil industry dominating the economic market in several coastal regions. A surge in global oil prices; a growing African middle class; and reduction in civil wars, foreign aid, and inflation collectively promise a more positive outlook for the future.

Countries such as Botswana, Tunisia, Morocco, Egypt, and South Africa are economically the wealthiest on the continent, with regions such as East Africa showing signs of economic stability. Despite the economic upswing, much of sub-Saharan

Africa's future economic prosperity is held hostage by devastating diseases such as AIDS, particularly in areas of southern Africa, and the growing effects of climate change and man-made environmental degradation throughout the subcontinent.

12. Technology and Material

Societies use technology to transform their physical world, and culture heavily influences the development and use of technology. Africa lags far behind most of the world in manufacturing capacity and output. Even the more economically-developed nations such as South Africa are competitively weak when compared to non-African industrialized nations. During the 1970s and 1980s, Africa experienced some growth in raw exports although this increase did little to boost long-term manufacturing capacity.

Today, Africa is experiencing an actual decline in manufacturing capacity due primarily to a lull in the global economy, along with other indigenous issues such as environmental stress, poor physical and organizational infrastructure, and a shortage of skilled personnel. Likewise, African manufacturing capacity is no match against global powers such as China and significant Southeast Asian markets.

International aid from both governmental and non-governmental organizations has helped African nations establish preliminary economic footholds. For example, many of them have dedicated industrial developmental zones to attract foreign investment and increase export-related manufacturing capacity, although Africa is far removed from having a significant role in the global marketplace in the foreseeable future.

Now that we have introduced general concepts that characterize African society at large, we will now focus on specific features of Senegalese society.

PART 2 – CULTURE SPECIFIC

1. HISTORY AND MYTH

Historical Overview

Archeological records and artifacts suggest that a civilization existed in the Senegal River Valley as early as 2,500 years ago, where it established trade routes linking West Africa to Mediterranean and trans-Saharan commerce centers. At its height between the 8th and 11th centuries, the Kingdom of Ghana became the first state to prosper from the West African trading enterprise (primarily gold, salt, and slaves). Eventually, this kingdom spanned parts of present-day eastern Senegal and western Mali.

During the late 11th century, the legendary Almoravid Dynasty, which was a tribal Berber-Muslim power in North Africa (primarily present-day Morocco), partnered with the northern Senegalese Takrur Empire (a trading center located in the Senegal Valley and a rival to the Ghana Empire, which was the regional power) to extend their territories and Islamic influence into southern Senegal. Eventually, heroic Malinke (one of West Africa's largest ethnic groups) emperor Soundiata Keita supplanted the Ghana emperor Soumaoro Kante and established the Mali Empire as the regional power. Stretching from the Atlantic coast to the

border of present-day Nigeria, the Mali Empire became the greatest of all West African kingdoms by the 14th century. By the mid-15th century, the Mali Empire began to decline and its far-western vassal state, Wolof (also known as Djolof and Jolof), ruled parts of present-day Senegal and Gambia.

European Influence

Eventually, the impact of trade with Europe led to the Wolof provinces gaining their independence and forming smaller kingdoms. Portuguese traders were the first Europeans to arrive in Senegal during the latter 15th century. In the 16th century the French, British, and Dutch supplanted the Portuguese, seeking control of two strategic slave collection points: Senegal's northern port city of St. Louis and Ile de Gorée ("Gorée Island"), a small Atlantic island located near the modern Senegalese port city of Dakar.

Slave Trade

Between the 16th and 18th centuries the slave trade linked Senegal to Europe, gaining momentum in West Africa as well as the Americas through the European Trans-Atlantic Slave trade that lasted until the 19th century. By the late 17th century, the French secured St. Louis, the Senegal River and Gorée Island, while the British controlled the Gambia River.

Today, Senegal's Gorée Island and Gambia's James Island serve as harsh reminders of the catastrophic human trade industry that permanently altered the world economic and social landscapes (Picture: slave auction house on Gorée Island). Overall, between 12 and 15 million Africans were exported as slaves (see Part I – Culture General, *History & Myth*).

Colonial Era

In the early 19th century, the French began to transform their trading outposts into a Senegalese colony, which by the early 20th century, became one of several colonies in an administrative federation – the French West Africa (renamed the French Community in 1958). In the aftermath of World War II, all the French-ruled territories in sub-Saharan Africa, with the exception of Guinea, joined the French Community whose membership granted them the option of eventually achieving complete independence.

Similarly, the British would control Gambia [a strip of real estate along the Gambia River dividing Senegal into northern and southern (also known as Casamance) regions]. At the beginning of the 20th century, the French established a federal capital for French West Africa in Dakar (with St. Louis remaining the capital of Senegal until 1958), where French administrators set policies for the economic, social, and educational development of French West Africa.

Independence

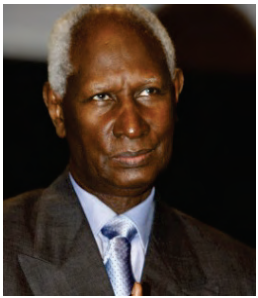
In early 1959 Senegal and the Sudanese Republic (formerly known as French Sudan – not to be confused with the existing Sudan nation) formed the Federation of Mali as part of the French Community. However, in 1960 Senegal withdrew from the merger to form an independent republic with the former French Sudan becoming the independent nation of Mali. Upon independence Leopold Senghor (pictured, courtesy of Wikimedia) became Senegal's first President, a position he would hold for more than 20 years, with Mamadou Dia its first Prime Minister.

Political Reform

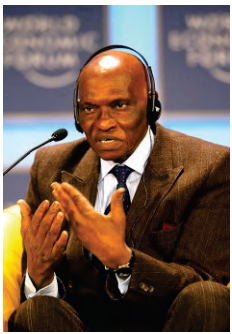
In December 1962, Dia was arrested for allegedly provoking a coup, and Abdou Diouf was appointed Prime Minister. Soon after, Senegal adopted a new constitution which increased the President's power and resulted in a period of one-party rule. In 1976 Senghor encouraged lawmakers to conduct a constitutional

review, leading to the legalization of three political parties: the Socialist Party (SP), which represented President Senghor and his former Senegalese Progressive Union; the more liberal Senegalese Democratic Party (PDS) led by Abdoulaye Wade, who would eventually become President; and the Marxist African Party for Independence (PAI) modeled after the Soviet Union. This planned and limited liberalization was expanded in subsequent years to allow for multiparty politics.

Presidential Secession



In 1980, President Senghor retired, appointing Prime Minister Diouf (pictured, courtesy of Wikimedia) as his successor. Diouf would serve 4 presidential terms from 1981-2000. During his reign, Diouf encouraged broader diplomatic engagements, particularly with other developing nations, thereby strengthening Senegal's commitment to democracy and human rights. However, domestic politics were marked by frequent protests over elections, border tensions with neighboring countries (particularly Guinea-Bissau), and a violent separatist movement in the southern Casamance region (discussed below).



Peaceful Political Transition

In the 2000 presidential election, PDS opposition leader Abdoulaye Wade (pictured, courtesy of Wikimedia) would defeat Diouf in Senegal's second peaceful transition of power and its first between opposing political parties. This surprising victory after nearly 40 years of socialist rule demonstrated significant progress towards Senegal's quest for *sopi* [the Wolof word for "change" (see *Language & Communication*)] through political and economic reform.

Wade's priorities included repairing the nation's finances, strengthening ties with France, bringing an end to the fighting in Casamance, and putting an end to the corruption and inefficiency promoted during the SP regime. Within the first few weeks of his administration, Wade proposed constitutional changes that resulted in major government reform to include new parliamentary elections (Wade's PDS party gained control of Parliament) and a reduction in the presidential term from 7 to 5 years – this measure was implemented with Wade's reelection in 2007.

Despite a number of promising economic and social proposals, the Wade administration was burdened by internal governmental power struggles, continued economic decline, and social unrest. Similarly, resolving the regional Casamance conflict would prove to be a daunting challenge that continues to this day. Wade was supplanted in 2012 by PDS opponent Macky Sall (pictured – see *Political and Social Relations*).

Casamance Conflict

While Senegal's history has been mostly peaceful, the nation has suffered from a protracted separatist movement in the Diola ethnic region of Casamance. In 1982, a Diola rebel group, the Casamance Movement of Democracy Forces (CMDF), launched a campaign for independence arguing that the Diola suffered from discrimination and neglect by the dominant Wolof in northern Senegal.

More than 2 decades of violence have cost an estimated 3,500 lives. In December 2004 the Senegalese government reached a peace agreement with CMDF mainliners, although a rebel faction opposing the treaty continues to fight for independence (IRIN Photo © Nancy Palus: A woman and her children are among hundreds of people to flee Diabir just outside of Ziguinchor, the main city in Casamance, following clashes between the army and separatist rebels).

Legend of Mame Coumba Bang

In ancient times, African oral legends and myths were used to preserve history and wisdom across generations and ethnic boundaries, teach moral lessons, and entertain.

One local myth, which originated in the former colonial Senegalese capital city of Saint Louis, is that of Mame Coumba Bang who was the legendary “goddess of the river.” For generations, she allegedly served as the city’s protectorate and bearer of good luck and fortune (see *Religion & Spirituality*).

Traditionally, to earn her favor, members were required to present sacrifices to the goddess who otherwise would bestow misfortune. Sacrificial articles included foodstuffs and relics. Of note, the more elaborate items earn greater protection.

While her spirit form was believed to be present along the Senegal River in its entirety, she primarily dwelled in certain places along the northern part of the river. Consequently, her residency was considered sacred and forbidden territory, and to enter the water would most surely result in the person drowning.

Some people actually claimed to have seen her sitting on the river’s edge before sunrise. When the sun appeared, she would return back to her “home.” A few people claim she habitually appeared at night or at other predetermined times, while others insist her activities were strictly unpredictable.

During perilous situations, Mame Coumba Bang and her family members were believed to be most vigilant in maintaining a balanced world order.

2. POLITICAL AND SOCIAL RELATIONS

Official Name
- Republic of Senegal

Capital
- Dakar (major port city)

Political Borders
- Mauritania: 505mi
- Mali: 260mi
- Guinea: 205mi
- Guinea-Bissau: 210mi
- Gambia: 460mi into Senegal's interior
- Atlantic Ocean: 330mi

Features
- Located in coastal West Africa, covering nearly 76,000 square miles, and about the size of North Dakota.
- Most of the country north of Gambia (a separate country that cuts through Senegal's southwest) is flat, with rolling plains and few trees. Part of the North lies in Africa's semiarid Sahel region (a region extending across the width of north-central Africa dividing the Sudanese grasslands and the Sahara Desert) and is subject to desertification. Much of Senegal also is subject to drought, overgrazing, and deforestation.
- The Southeast has plateaus with elevations over 1,600 feet, while the Southwest features forests and seasonally flooded lowlands.
- Has a tropical climate with warm temperatures year-round. Temperatures during the humid rainy season (usually July - September, depending on the region) regularly reach 95°F.
- Temperatures are moderate during the dry season (December–April), with highs around 80°F. The coastal areas are generally cooler than the interior.

- Annual precipitation averages 22 inches in Dakar, about half that amount in the North, and more than 60 inches in the Casamance region (southern section below Gambia).

Flag

It consists of three equal vertical bands of green, yellow, and red with a star in its center. The three colors represent Africa's oldest independent country, Ethiopia. Consequently, upon their independence other African countries have adopted them as representative pan-African colors. While green symbolizes Islam, yellow represents natural wealth and progress. Red stands for sacrifice and determination to gain independence, with the star signifying unity and hope.

Political Power

Senegal is a multi-party Republic containing three branches of government – executive, legislative, and judicial – with a legal system anchored in its French colonial experience and in Islamic law. There also exists an informal legal system which incorporates indigenous customs and beliefs. It is one of the few African states that never have experienced a coup d'etat (government overthrow).

For about 40 years the Socialist Party (PS) was Senegal's principal political party, although PS political dominance halted in March 2000 when Abdoulaye Wade (pictured) of the Senegalese Democratic Party (PDS) won the Presidency and peacefully ascended to power. Wade was defeated by PDS rival Macky Sall in 2012 (see *History & Myth*). Wade had served as 25-year PDS Secretary-General.

Regional Dynamics

Senegal is divided into 14 administrative regions (Dakar, Diourbel, Fatick, Kaffrine, Kaolack, Kedougou, Kolda, Louga, Matam, Saint-Louis, Sedhiou, Tambacounda, Thiès, and

Ziguinchor) each headed by a prefét (governor) appointed by and responsible to the President. Political power is delegated to regional assemblies and mayors.

Executive Branch

Chief-of-State: The President serves as both chief-of-state and commander-in-chief of the armed forces – currently Macky Sall (Senegal's 4th President) since 2012. Under the terms of the 2001 Constitution, future Presidents will serve no more than two 5-year terms. Abdoulaye Wade was the last President elected to a 7-year term (see *History & Myth*).

Prime Minister: Functions as head-of-government and appointed by the President – currently Mohammed Abdallah Boun Dionne since 2014.

Cabinet: A Council of Ministers is appointed by the Prime Minister in consultation with the President.

Legislative Branch

The legislative branch includes a two-chamber Parliament.

National Assembly: It consists of 150 members with 90 elected by popular vote and the other 60 elected by proportional party representation to serve 5-year terms.

Senate: Includes 100 members with 35 elected and 65 appointed by the President.

Judicial Branch

The President appoints justices to the two highest courts – the Constitutional Council and the Highest Appeals Court (equivalent to the US Supreme Court).

Defense

Senegal's armed forces consists of about 19,000 army, air force, navy, and gendarmerie (military police force) personnel primarily trained and equipped through assistance from French and US armed forces.

Senegal has participated in a variety of international and regional peacekeeping operations, most recently in African Union and United Nations missions in Darfur (Sudan), Liberia, Cote d'Ivoire, the Democratic Republic of Congo, and Sierra Leone (pictured: Senegal's peacekeeping forces, photo courtesy of the United Nations).

Senegal also supported peacekeeping missions in the Central African Republic in 1997 and Rwanda during the 1994 genocide. Of note, Senegal was the only Sub-Saharan nation to participate in the 1991 Persian Gulf War, siding with coalition forces.

Senegalese Air Force

Senegal's Air Force was established soon after the country gained independence from France in 1960 (see *History & Myth*), receiving its first aircraft from France, the C-47 transport and MH1521M lightweight surveillance aircraft. Today, the Air Force only possesses about 20 aircraft, 2 of which are combat-capable Mil Mi-35 Hind attack helicopters procured in 2005 (2007 estimates).

Primarily operating from the International Airport in Dakar, the Air Force also has several detachments located throughout the country. While Senegal does not have its own air defense capability, France is postured with over 300 air support personnel at Dakar to provide this capability. Additionally, the Senegalese Air Force has only a minimal peacekeeping capacity.

Relations with the US

The US and Senegal maintain strong relations, with the US providing Senegal considerable financial and technical assistance. Senegal took a strong position against the 9/11 terrorist attack on the US, hosting an October 2001 conference establishing the African Pact Against Terrorism.

Senegalese Air Force Rank Insignia

Security Issues

Opposition Groups: With the exception of ongoing violence in Casamance (see *History & Myth*), Senegal has experienced little civil disobedience since its 1960 independence from France.

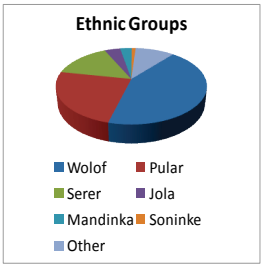
Regional Conflict: Senegal's most troublesome external disagreement has been with its northern neighbor, Mauritania. Internal ethnic violence in 1989 resulted in approximately 60,000 Mauritanian refugees fleeing to Senegal. Consequently, Mauritania has resisted allowing the refugees to return, while simultaneously Senegalese villagers have grown weary of these perceived intruders.

Similarly, there have been tensions between Senegal and both Gambia and Guinea-Bissau over the flow of Senegalese refugees escaping violence in Casamance (IRIN Photo above © Nancy Palus: Senegalese fleeing Casamance).

Crime: While violent crime is rare in Senegal, street crime such as petty theft is common in urban areas where travelers are advised to be especially vigilant a night. Also, business fraud against foreigners (primarily phony investment scams) is common mostly through e-mail media.

Ethnicity

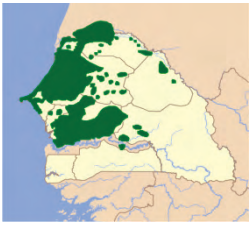
With an annual 2.45% growth rate, Senegal's population is approaching 14 million (2015 estimate). About 42% of the populace is urban and under age 15, with a growing number of youth migrating from rural areas to seek better economic opportunities in the cities. During the rainy season, many urban dwellers return to harvest rural crops.



Senegal's ethnic groups include the Wolof (43%), Pular (24%), Serer (15%), Jola (4%), Mandinka (3%), Soninke (1%), other African (9%), and Europeans and Lebanese (1%). Having historically enjoyed a peaceful coexistence, these groups have rarely experienced ethnic rivalry.

Wolof

Originating in the medieval West African Wolof Empire (See *History & Myth*), the Wolof comprise Senegal's largest and most influential ethnic group. They reside predominantly in the northern, western, and coastal regions (depicted in green) surrounding Dakar. In the past few centuries, the Wolof emerged as the culturally dominant group (a process sometimes referred to as "wolofization"), particularly in urban areas. The native Wolof language is either spoken or understood by about 90% of the nation's inhabitants. While they occupy the principal urban positions of power and wealth, many Wolof are rural peasant farmers. The Wolof are primarily Muslim, with small minorities practicing Christianity.



Pular

Pular speakers inhabit the grasslands in West Africa from Senegal to Cameroon, where they have traditionally thrived as semi-nomadic cattle herders, although some are traders. In Senegal Pular speakers are divided into two groups: the Fula (also known as Fulani and Peul, among other terms, in other West African countries) are located mostly in Senegal's North, while the Tukolor are found in the central Senegal River valley. Pular are predominantly of the Muslim faith (pictured: Pular Boys).

Serer

Predominantly fishermen and farmers along the Atlantic coast, the Serer are concentrated in the region of Thiès and in coastal regions between the Cap-Vert peninsula (Africa's westernmost tip – not to be confuse with Cape Verde islands) and the Gambia border. They comprise Senegal's largest Christian population (see *Religion & Spirituality*). Speaking languages related to both Pular and Wolof, the Serer remained attached to indigenous customs and religion until more recently when conversion to Christianity and Islam increased. Senegal's first President, Leopold Senghor, was Serer.

Jola (Diola)

Primarily occupying the western portion of the Casamance region, this group has one of the few cultures that does not conform to a hierarchal social structure and has traditionally existed as a decentralized society with no state structures. Unlike Senegal's other ethnic groups, the Jola have largely rejected Islam (see *Religion & Spirituality*), with many continuing to adhere to indigenous religious practices. Since their oral traditions reflect their decentralized social organization, there is no single narrative that explains their origins. Therefore the Jola appear to have emerged from diverse groups of rice farmers in the Casamance region.

Mandinka

Descendents from the ancient Mali Empire (see *History and Myth*), the Mandinka of Senegal are a subset of the larger group of Mande speakers who reside throughout West Africa (Picture courtesy of Wikimedia: Mandinka Griot Al-Haji Papa Susso performing songs from oral tradition – see *Learning & Knowledge*). Collectively, the Mandinka form one of the four largest ethno-linguistic groups in West Africa (along with the Fula, Hausa, and Songhai) consisting of about 11 million people. Primarily of the Muslim faith, they are rural farmers occupying the border regions between Senegal and Gambia and forming the largest single group in the Middle Casamance or Sedhiou region.

Soninke

Founders of the Ghana Empire, the Soninke were among the first sub-Saharan ethnic groups to embrace Islam and to eventually disperse into Senegal and several other West African countries. Today, they are prominently centered around their original homelands in the upper Senegal River Valley and along the Senegal-Mali border. Traditionally, they engage in both trade (salt, gold, and diamonds) and agriculture.

Non-African Groups

Primarily occupying urban areas; people of French, Lebanese and Syrian descent migrated to Senegal during the 19th-century colonial period when Senegal was the administrative center for French West Africa (see *History & Myth*). These groups subsisted primarily as administrators, merchants, and technicians and have remained since independence in their same capacity. Caucasians or foreigners are commonly referred to as "*Toubab*" in the Wolof language.

Social Relations

Senegal is known as the land of *teraanga* or hospitality, which is a key part of interpersonal relations and implies respect and consideration for others. Senegalese passionately practice *teraanga* in their daily lives by frequently taking time to interact on a personal level. Traditionally, it is a common practice in their culture for members to sincerely inquire about each other's family well-being. To a Senegalese, it is imperative to get to know his colleagues personally prior to conducting business with them (see *Time & Space*). While Senegalese value friendships and honor guests with warm hospitality, it is important to be mindful that in many Muslim cultures, men and women do not normally socialize together.

Status

Traditionally, some but not all of Senegalese society was stratified into three hereditary-based social classes to include nobles or "free" people (*geer)*, professional craftsmen (*neeno*) who were further divided by specialized trade, and slaves or "non-free" people (*jaam*). While these complex social

distinctions have lost much of their validity in contemporary society, particularly slavery which was progressively abolished after independence, they do remain deeply ingrained in social relations.

Senegalese ethnicities are acutely attuned to their familial origins. For example, the last name “Thiam” traditionally is associated with blacksmiths and jewelers, while “Samb” and “Mbaye” are associated with griots or praise-singers (see *Learning & Knowledge*). Similarly, the “Ndiaye” and the “Diouf” have evolved from the “free” and noble lineage. Also, ancestry is a major concern in choosing marriage partners – marriage across status boundaries rarely occurs. However, with Western influence, social boundaries have become blurred in contemporary society, particularly in urban areas where the general populace has redefined traditional professions and social relations (see *Family & Kinship* and *Sex & Gender*).

Tradition of the Kola Nut

Since ancient times, the kola nut has had social significance throughout West Africa. Renowned as a “quick fix” energy booster, some people describe it as the “poor man’s friend” for its high caffeine content. In fact, the first Coca-Cola recipe contained the kola nut thus coining the “cola” label.

Among local tribesmen and in professional settings, chewing the kola nut is a popular social pastime. However, due to its bitter taste, it is not swallowed. Conversely, it has been consumed in traditional household remedies to treat digestive disorders, nausea, and diarrhea. Its high caffeine content is believed to suppress anxiety, migraine headaches, and hunger.

Among some ethnic groups, it is customary for the prospective husband to deliver a few kola nuts to his future in-laws, whose acceptance indicates marriage approval. Similarly, exchanging kola nuts between rivals signifies a peace accord, with the nut halved between the two parties to signify goodwill.

Sense-of-Humor

Good humor is foundational to Senegalese social relations and usually includes light-hearted "teasing" or joking among different ethnic groups. While this approach may appear offensive to an outsider, to a local inhabitant it is a subtle way of defusing ethnic tensions, particularly when approaching a sensitive subject, and helps to seal long-term social relationships.

Social Etiquette

Visiting: In Senegal, as with most kin-based societies, visiting is fundamental to maintaining social harmony within the family unit and the community-at-large. Senegalese visit each other regularly and oftentimes unannounced, particularly in many rural areas where telecommunications are not widely available. Uninvited guests usually visit between mealtimes, either in the late morning or early evening. In urban areas where time management is more structured, guests usually call in advance before visiting.

Invited guests: When invited to a Senegalese's home, guests commonly remove their shoes before entering, with the host offering them the most comfortable seat. It is appropriate for guests to bring their hosts inexpensive gifts such fruit or cookies for the children. Many Muslims do not consume alcohol; therefore, it is not a preferable gift item.

Hosts usually serve refreshments, a generosity a guest is obligated to graciously accept as to decline could be offensive. The most common beverage is tea, which is normally served in three rounds with sugar – usually sweeter with each additional serving (see *Sustenance & Health*). It is also common for the host and guests to share kola nuts, which contain a mild caffeine stimulant. While smoking is widespread among males, visitors to traditional Muslim homes are expected to refrain from smoking. Similarly, it is considered inappropriate for women to smoke.

Social Awareness

- Bartering is considered a "national sport" and a cultural norm in Senegal (see *Time & Space*).
- In cities, expect to be confronted by beggars and street vendors who desperately wish to sell their wares.
  - Simple eye contact signals your interest in making a contribution or purschasing an item.
- Market vendors and taxi drivers often overcharge foreigners (toubabs), particularly tourists.
- Foreign females, especially tourists and female military members not in uniform, should anticipate instances of sexual harassment and marriage proposals from local men.
- Public photography is sometimes an issue.
  - The locals, particularly market vendors, are known to be offended when photographed without first consenting and may demand payment for their services.
  - Avoid taking pictures of military or police installations.
- In many areas, restrooms consist of pit latrines rather than flushing toilets and usually have no toilet paper – water and the left hand are used for hygiene.
  - In urban areas that do have flushing toilets, they may not be operational because of frequent water shortages.
  - Each user is expected to collect water in a bucket from a tap located either in the bathroom or outside and manually flush the toilet.
- Expect frequent and unplanned power outages.

3. RELIGION AND SPIRITUALITY

Senegal is predominantly a Muslim nation (94%) with the remaining 6% consisting of Christianity (5%), mostly Roman Catholic, and indigenous religions (1%). While Islamic institutions and practices dominate its society, Senegal is classified as a secular state where religious diversity exists. Similarly, Senegal's constitution provides for freedom of religion and liberally allows a variety of religious practices.

Muslim Faith

Origins of Islam

Islam dates to the 6th century when God's final prophet, Muhammad, was born in Mecca in the current country of Saudi Arabia. Muslims believe that while Muhammad was meditating in the desert, the Archangel Gabriel visited him over a 23-year period, revealing the Qur'an, or the "Holy Book," to guide their everyday life. Comparable to the Holy Bible for Christians and the Torah for Jews, the Qur'an represents a core belief that helps shape Muslims' lifelong values. (Photo: Grand Mosque in Dakar's Ouakam commune, courtesy of Wikimedia).

Meaning of Islam

Islam means "submission to the will of God" and acceptance of His wisdom. As with other faiths, Islam is more than a religion to its adherents – it is a way of life.

Muslim Sects

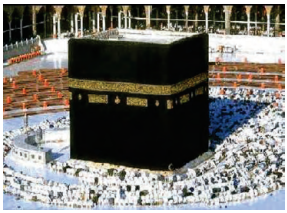
Islam is divided into two divisions: Sunni and Shi'a. Senegalese Muslims are predominantly Sunni and are distinguished by their belief that the leader (*Caliph*) of the Muslim community (*Ummah*) should be elected. Conversely, the Shi'a believe the Muslim leader should be a direct descendant of the Prophet Muhammad (Photo: Sufi Mausoleum near Dakar, courtesy of CultureGrams, ProQuest 2014).

Sufi Tradition: Characterized by mysticism and ritualistic prayer, the Sufi tradition of Islam is common in West Africa. Many Sufis belong to religious brotherhoods (*tariqa*) whose members adhere to teachings from their spiritual leaders. While adhering to Sunni tradition, Sufis are not fundamentalists.

Five Pillars of Islam

There are five basic principles of the Muslim faith that all Muslims accept and follow.

- **Profession of Faith (*Shahada*):** "There is no god but God and Muhammad is His Messenger."
- **Prayer (*Salat*):** Pray five times a day facing toward the Ka'aba in Mecca. The Ka'aba (pictured) is considered the center of the Muslim world and a unifying focal point for Islamic worship.



- **Charity (*Zakat*):** Involves an obligatory tithe or donation of alms to the poor.
- **Fasting (*Sawm*):** Involves abstaining from food, drink, and sexual relations from sunrise to sunset during holy month of Ramadan (30 days).
- **Pilgrimage to Mecca (The *Hajj*):** Every adult Muslim who is physically and financially able is expected to perform at least one Hajj in a lifetime.

Shared Perspectives

Many Islamic tenets parallel the other two major world religions, Judaism and Christianity. In fact, Muslims consider Christians and Jews "people of the Book," referring to biblical scriptures, because they share their monotheistic belief in one God.

Abraham: All three faiths trace their lineage back to Abraham, known as *Ibrahim* in Islam. However, Christians and Jews trace their line back to Abraham, his wife Sarah, and their son Isaac; while Muslims descend from Abraham and his Egyptian concubine, Hagar, and their son Ismail.

Scriptures: Much of the content in the Qur'an is similar to teachings and stories found in the Christian Bible's Old and New Testaments. Muslims view Islam as a completion of previous revelations to Jewish and Christian prophets, although Muslims believe Christians distorted God's word and that Muhammad received the true revelation of God.

Jesus: The three religions differ significantly regarding the role of Jesus. While Christians consider Him the divine Messiah who fulfills the Jewish Scriptures, Jews are still waiting for the Messiah to come. Muslims recognize Jesus as having been a prophet, but do not acknowledge the Christian view of His divinity. They do not believe in the Christian Trinity.

View of Death: Muslims like Christians strongly advocate the afterlife. Muslims believe that the time of death, like birth, is determined by Allah. Thus old age, illness, or accident are not considered the real causes of death. While people grieve the loss of family members or friends, they do not view death itself as a negative event. As with Christians, Muslims believe that a person who lived a good life goes on to live in Heaven (Photo: Dakar's Islamic Institute Library, courtesy of Wikimedia).

Concept of Jihad

The concept of Jihad, or inner striving, is a fundamental element within Islam. Traditionally, it is the principled and moral pursuit of God's will to lead a virtuous life. It should not be confused with the publicized violence often associated with Jihad. Most Muslims are strongly opposed to terrorism, considering it contrary to Islamic beliefs.

Ramadan

Ramadan is a month-long time for inner reflection, self-control, and focus on God. During this time, Muslims who are physically able are required to fast from dawn to sunset. Many Muslims believe that denying their hunger tempers them to learn self-control, appreciate the difficulties of the poor, and gain spiritual

renewal – by fasting, one learns to appreciate the good in life. It is common for Muslims to break their fast at sunset with a light meal of dates followed by prayer and then dinner.

Ramadan occurs during the 9th month of the Islamic calendar (see *Time & Space*) and observes 3 Islamic holy days.

- **Lailat ul-Qadr:** Known as "The Night of Power," it commemorates Muhammad receiving the first verses of the *Qur'an*.
- **Eid-al-Adha (Tabaski):** It is the "Festival of Sacrifice" and acknowledges Abraham's willingness to sacrifice his son, Ishmael (Isaac according to the Christian faith), as proof of his loyalty to God. It is celebrated on the day the Hajj ends.
- **Eid-al-Fitr (Korité):** It is a 3-day "Festival of Fast-Breaking" celebrated at Ramadan's end.

Islam in Senegal

Islam was introduced to Senegal's Takrur Kingdom during the 11th century when its King War Jaabi adopted the faith (see *History & Myth*). While it became the majority religion for the Takrur population by the 15th century, for most states further south Islam remained a minority religion well into the 19th century, as the first converts were limited to individuals of noble birth. Consequently, Muslims and traditional religious practitioners coexisted, although not always peacefully, until Islamic Sufism became a majority religion about the time of Senegal's French colonization (Photo: Mosque in Touba, Courtesy of Wikimedia).

In contemporary Senegalese society, most Muslims continue to claim affiliation with one of several Sufi orders, which rank among the country's major institutions. Senegal's second largest city, Touba, is its most impressive Sufi city, consisting of about half a million inhabitants. Administered by *Mouridiya* sheikhs (elders) (see text box below), it is an autonomous city that since its founding in 1887 has successfully restricted

national government intervention (Photo: Mosque of the *Mouridiya* order at Touba, courtesy of Wikimedia).

Sufi Practices: While Senegal's various Sufi orders embrace different doctrinal approaches, they do share common features. A caliph heads the typical order or brotherhood. He usually is a direct descendant from the order's founder and is therefore heir to his forefather's divine grace (*baraka*). Next in line are sheikhs (*muqaddams*) who also inherit their positions from their paternal lineage followed by members-at-large (*taalibes* or *murits*). Each *taalibe* is assigned a sheikh to provide divine guidance and support, while the sheikh looks to his *taalibe* for special service and monetary donations. The *taalibes* from the various orders unite to form associations (*dahiras*) usually affiliated with a particular sheikh, neighborhood, or business.

Children usually are socialized into their family's Sufi order at an early age, where they are assigned their sheikh (usually same as a parent's) and usually attend Qur'anic (Islamic) schools (*daara*). While a child's Sufi affiliation typically is based on familial inheritance, it is possible for a *taalibe* youth to choose a different order and sheikh altogether.

Each Sufi order maintains at least one shrine likely associated with the tomb of the order's founder. Some shrines such as Touba and Madina Gounass have developed into cities. These shrines also serve as Islamic education centers.

Christianity

Portuguese traders introduced Roman Catholicism to Senegal during the 15th century (see *History & Myth*). The first Christian communities were established among Lancados inhabitants (offspring from Portuguese-African blending) living in ports along the Atlantic coastline. When the French displaced the Portuguese during the 16th century, Catholicism spread within

the Franco-African (known as Métis) communities predominantly in the port city of Saint Louis. By the 1840s, Senegalese males began to become ordained as priests, and once French colonialism became entrenched in Senegalese society by the 1880s, Catholicism was institutionalized with missionaries spreading it into Senegal's interior.

In an effort to maintain social harmony, French authorities prohibited the spread of Christian influence into Muslim communities. Consequently, Christian missionaries only were allowed to concentrate predominantly on Serer and Diola populations (see *Political & Social Relations*). For the most part, Muslim and Christian communities have coexisted peacefully, particularly based on the notion that both faiths worship the same God, although with different approaches (Photo: Dakar cathedral, courtesy of Wikimedia).

In contemporary society, Senegal's Catholic community is concentrated primarily in urban areas such as Dakar, Saint Louis, Thiès, and Ziguinchor. Muslims generally consider the Catholic Church equivalent to a Sufi order having its own clerical hierarchy and social institutions. Muslims occasionally attend private Christian schools.

Indigenous Religions

A decline in indigenous religion occurred with the introduction of Islam and Christianity. In contemporary society, the continuation of traditional practices alongside new beliefs based on Islam or Christianity is a common approach. This blending of practices is found throughout Africa and particularly among Senegal's Diola and Serer ethnicities (see *Political & Social Relations*).

Animism

Prior to the influx of Islam into Senegal, most inhabitants practiced animism, a belief that spiritual forces inhabit natural objects such as trees and rivers and influence human

existence. Animism is rarely based on sacred doctrine but mostly on oral traditions passed through several generations. Senegalese animists believe natural objects such as trees and animals are sacred and must be respected – a conviction that closely connects them to the natural environment (Photo: landscape in Casamance, courtesy of Wikimedia).

Consequently, their reverence towards nature drives their methods for adapting to their surroundings. For example, some traditionalists suggest that nature spirits use their divine sense of the cosmos to guide their agricultural lifestyle and thereby enhance crop growth for humanity.

Ancestor Spirits

Similarly, most traditional African religions also promote the notion of a supreme being who is creator of the universe. There also exist other lesser Gods and Goddesses (*Mendis, Thiorak*, and *Taahkarr*). Embodied in this faith is the conviction that ancestor spirits (*tuur* or *pangool)* allegedly occupy certain places (particularly shrines) and have great power and influence on the daily lives of village inhabitants, who seek mediation with the spirit world through diviners empowered with mystical insight (see text box in *History & Myth*). Other ethnic groups look to the village chief as the secular religious head of the community, who earns favor from the spirit world by virtue of his honorable position (Photo below: Worshiping the supernatural in Kaolak, courtesy of Wikimedia).

While many ancestor spirits are believed to bestow blessings, other spirits render curses instead. Among the Serer ethnic group, an evil free spirit (*rab*) is believed to roam the countryside and attaches itself to an individual or place for the sole purpose of causing trauma or illness. Other bad spirits are

believed to cause environmental disaster such as drought and epidemic diseases (see *Sustenance & Health).* In order to protect themselves from these evil spirits, clan members rely on psychics or traditional healers such as a diviner or Sufi sheikh to intercede with the spirit world and use their divine powers to relieve people of hardship. Similarly, some inhabitants wear sacred charms or amulets to dispel evil spirits.

Sufi Brotherhoods

Islamic brotherhoods spread into West Africa from Morocco in the 16th century and have traditionally exerted signifcant political influence. Believed to hold divine powers, brotherhood leaders (*marabouts*) serve as spiritual intermediaries between God and the common populace.

The earliest *marabout* brotherhood south of the Sahara was the *Qadariyyah* whose teachings (charity and humility) remain popular among Senegal's Mandinka tribe (see *Political & Social Relations*). Similarly, the Morocco-based *Tijaniyya* brotherhood was introduced to Senegal by El Hajj Omar Tall in the mid-19th century, followed by the founding of the *Mouridiyya* in the late 19th century. Both of these brotherhoods remain popular in contemporary society. Of note, a fourth order, the *Layene*, was an offshoot of the *Tijaniyya* brotherhood with remnants found today in the Lebou village of Yoff on the outskirts of Dakur and in the Cap Vert Peninsula.

Founded by Sheikh Amadou Bamba, the *Mouridiyya* is by far the most renowned Senegalese brotherhood having over 2 million followers. Its rise is somewhat simultaneous to colonial expansion, where the *Mouridiyya* became a powerful resistance to French domination (see *History & Myth*). As the French weakened or disabled traditional social structures, the brotherhoods provided refuge for a society seeking to preserve its heritage and autonomy.

4. FAMILY AND KINSHIP

Family Organization

The family remains the singularly most important institution in Senegal, with the extended family unit generally comprised of two or more nuclear families to include parents and offspring plus their families, grandparents, aunts, and uncles. Like most African nations, Senegal is a kin-based society, where group solidarity and welfare take precedence over individual achievement. Similarly, decision-making is reached through group consensus.

Large rural family units consisting of 10 or more persons are considered a premium in agrarian societies, functioning as the foundation for providing a dependable work force and building cohesive communities. Conversely, in urban areas families tend to be smaller, often consisting of a single nuclear unit, and physically segregated from extended family – a lifestyle based more on economic necessity than personal choice. Similarly, urban living generally reflects a higher social status and an appreciation for individual achievement – characteristics promoted through Westernization.

Despite geographical separation, kinship ties remain strong, with extended families contributing substantially to its members' social and financial wellbeing regardless of location. Traditionally, the Senegalese family unit functions as an informal welfare system that ensures all its members are sustained.

Paternal and Maternal Authority

Senegal is a patrilineal and patrilocal society, which means authority and inheritance primarily occur through the male bloodline and the extended family resides near or with the elder male head-of-household. However, in traditional Senegalese

society prior to the 19th century, matrilineal affiliation also had relevance when determining social identity and status, with some men carrying both their mother's and father's names. Similarly, authority and power were also inherited through maternal lineages. With Islamic family law institutionalized in the late 19th century, matrilineal practices began to decline as patrilineal practices became dominant (see *Sex & Gender*). In Senegal and throughout Africa, it is common for two or more lineages to share a common ancestor to collectively form a clan.

In Muslim societies, the elderly (both male and female) generally enjoy great respect. Unmarried children usually remain with their parents until they wed, at which time men establish their own household, or in many cases, remain with their parents. Regardless of the arrangement, elder parents typically reside with the eldest son's family, where the younger wife (wives in polygynous arrangements) will honor and serve her husband's elder family members. Senegalese elders (both sexes) are revered for their experience and wisdom and function as counsel for most family decisions. Married women normally join their husband's paternal household.

Motherhood Reverence

Motherhood is revered in Senegalese society, with a woman's status in the household determined by the number of children she bears, especially sons (see *Sex & Gender*). Symbolizing family honor, mothers, particularly the elders, are consulted regarding communal decisions.

Dating

With Western influence, courtship is becoming more common in contemporary society (particularly among urban youth),

although arranged marriages remain customary in rural areas – a couple typically accepts parental judgment in coordinating their union.

Marriage

As in most kin-based cultures, marriage in rural Senegal traditionally has served as a social contract to ensure the continuation of family heritage. It represents the alliance of two families, with individual choice of spouse limited. Arranged marriages typically occur at a young age.

Conversely, urban marriages generally occur between two consenting adults who have reached a more mature age. While the couple chooses to marry, they normally seek parental permission to maintain extended-family unity.

Bridewealth: Unlike a dowry, in which the woman would bring material items of value to the marriage, bridewealth is compensation from the prospective groom to the bride's family for loss of her labor. Because it is reimbursable in a divorce, bridewealth tends to discourage marriage dissolution.

Similarly, the prospective groom is expected to demonstrate financial security to gain marriage consent from his prospective wife's family. Consequently, during courtship he is expected to bestow lavish gifts such as household appliances, livestock, and clothing to impress his future in-laws.

Polygyny: It is customary in many Muslim societies to practice polygyny, whereby a man may have up to four wives; however, Islamic law requires that he equally provide for them all. This tradition is anchored in the notion that historically, men had a higher mortality rate than women, many of whom remained unwed or were widowed. Consequently, polygyny became a necessary means of providing for women and producing large rural families (work force).

While once a common practice, polygyny is becoming less popular primarily due to cost of sustaining multiple households and because many contemporary urban women reject the status of secondary spouse. However in rural agrarian economies where the female workload is more labor-intensive, women tend to be more receptive to having the mutual support from multiple wives.

Marriage Ceremony

Marriages have both religious and social contexts. While the formal religious ceremony is nominally brief, the social celebrations are rather elaborate and extensive. Both families usually host receptions, followed by several days of entertainment and dining.

Divorce

In Islamic societies, grounds for divorce are based primarily on adultery, mutual incompatibility, and the husband's failure to meet the wife's basic needs. Traditionally, the man retains most of the property and the children.

Housing

Extended family members usually live close to one another, often within a shared compound centered on a courtyard which includes various family dwellings and multi-purpose buildings. Cooking and cleaning are usually conducted outdoors in the courtyard, although there is a separate cookhouse to use during inclement weather. Home furnishings are usually modest, meeting only the basic necessities.

In polygynous households, each wife typically has a smaller house of her own, all within the same compound. Younger children usually do not have their own rooms and will either sleep with their mother or in the living room. When the children collectively reach a more mature age, the family will occupy another house having separate children's rooms.

In urban areas where space is a premium, Western-style single-family dwellings are common. As with rural lifestyles, urban cooking and cleaning also are conducted outdoors, usually on a terrace. Housing units in modern apartment complexes resemble those found in other modern societies.

Access to affordable urban housing is a social concern, particularly with Senegal's high population growth rate (see *Political & Social Relations*) and sizeable rural-to-urban migration. Consequently, slum areas are common, particularly in Dakar, where about 30% of the population (nearly one million) occupy shantytowns.

Rites-of-Passage

Rites-of-passage are ceremonies recognizing life's transitions and tend to vary by ethic group.

Birth: It is traditional in Senegal for expectant mothers to remain secluded at home for the duration of their pregnancy. Similarly, a pregnancy is considered a private matter that is rarely a topic for social discussion. Newborns in Senegalese society represent the family's future and are traditionally the primary interest in a marriage. Because the first week following birth is considered fragile for both mother and child, the two remain isolated at home with only the closest family members allowed to visit. Once the pair stabilizes, the mother usually carries the child on her back during her daily activities.

Naming Ceremony: A child is usually named in a formal ceremony around the 7th day following birth. Known as *ngente* in the Wolof language, which means "to get out," the ceremony is a dual celebration for new mother and child. Having been confined for several months, the mother is now free to "get out" and reenter society.

During the naming event, the mother's sister usually holds the child while the village religious leader (imam or sheikh)

announces the child's name, which the parents decide in advance. Children are often named after friends or relatives to strengthen relationships. After reciting verses from the Qur'an (Muslim Holy Book), the leader whispers the baby's name into his right ear. A large feast featuring a slaughtered sheep or goat concludes the event.

Adulthood: Children learn their adult roles and responsibilities at an early age. Mothers teach their daughters household duties, while fathers generally teach sons to support a family. For girls the transition to womanhood occurs when she experiences her first menstrual cycle. Less customary than in the past, circumcision has traditionally marked a boy's passage into manhood and typically was conducted around age 16 in pre-Islamic times. Today, it usually occurs around age 7.

Among some of the smaller ethnic groups (primarily the Serer, Mandinka, and others in the Southeast), the traditional male initiation ceremony is a month-long process. It involves several boys retreating to a secluded forest where village elders teach them adult responsibilities – the actual circumcision culminates this instruction. Once the young men heal, they return to the village for a ceremonial celebration (*kasak*) involving a series of songs and dances – attendees sing songs praising the newly initiated men for their bravery. This ceremony is portrayed in the miniseries "*Roots*" based upon Alex Haley's novel. Female circumcision is also a traditional practice in many African societies, although not nearly as ceremonial as for males (see *Sex and Gender*).

Death: Muslims customarily bury their dead within 24 hours (Christians within 48 hours). The deceased body is touched only after a blessing has been offered and the family has mourned. Thereafter, the body is washed, wrapped in cloth, and carried through the village in a celebratory procession to honor the deceased. Following the burial, festivities continuing at the family's home.

5. SEX AND GENDER

Sexual Relations

Largely as a result of Western influence, sexual perspectives are changing in many African societies including Senegal. In this traditionally male-dominated culture, sexual relations primarily have served to produce offspring, although gradually as gender roles have altered, so has the value of romance in a marital relationship. Urban trends influence more men to pursue monogamous marriage patterns while many women seek professional careers (See *Family & Kinship*).

Gender Roles

In traditional Senegalese families, labor generally is divided along gender boundaries, with both men and women having a significant role in sustaining the family unit. In addition to their household responsibilities, many women participate in agricultural activities and help earn the family income.

Women in Society

Precolonial: As noted in *Family & Kinship*, women held advanced political positions in traditional Senegalese society. The topmost woman in the royal family held the title of *lingeer* (queen mother), who was usually either the mother or maternal sister of the king. She exercised real power as the custodian over the crown property.

Lingeers also wielded notable influence in settling succession disputes. For example, they would use the power of their matrilineal affiliation to have enthroned a royal prince from their own bloodline in order to perpetuate the political power of their *garmi* (noble) family. The *lingeer* also served as the model for matronly values, a position that is revered still today in Senegalese households.

Another pre-colonial female position of authority was that of the Métis *signare*. The Métis or *Lancados* were the offspring of

indigenous African women and European merchants (mainly Portuguese, Dutch, and French). A prominent 17th-century French-speaking Métis community emerged in the European-controlled island cities of Gorée and Saint Louis. Because their European wives declined to follow them to Africa for fear of the health risks, these merchants established "country marriages" with African women. While some of these native wives existed as slaves, others were from aristocratic lineages and known as *signares*. These merchants aligned with the *signare* status as a means of promoting their entrepreneur prospects.

Signares are remembered as masterful culinary artists and patrons of aesthetics. They were also shrewd businesswomen who owned property and employed a male workforce. By the mid-18th century about 75% of the registered properties in Gorée belonged to Métis women. The significance of the Métis *signares* is well represented in legendary "goddess of the river," a local myth which originated in Saint Louis (see text box in *History & Myth*).

Contemporary: The role of Senegalese women in contemporary society is anchored in a delicate blending of African, Muslim, and Western traditions. As seen throughout sub-Saharan Africa, Senegalese society features a dichotomy of lifestyles for women. Governed by Islamic law, the first approach relegates women to the private sector as subjects of male domination – this practice remains common in rural areas.

The other method promotes the modern urban trend of seeking professional opportunities in the public realm. While women generally are less represented than men in professional occupations, urban women have more opportunities to gain an education and advance professionally, particularly in government positions. Urban women comprise about 45% of Senegal's workforce and occupy 43% of Parliamentary positions. Still, a majority of married women remain at home to conduct household responsibilities, although many of those

women who do remain at home also engage in small-scale commerce such as jewelry sales to supplement family income.

Women also have achieved active roles in conducting traditional religious practices, serving as priestesses in Christian communities and *sheikhah* in Muslim orders – an honor that is rare in many Muslim societies.

Female Freedom

Compared to some of the more conservative Islamic cultures, many Senegalese women enjoy greater freedom. For instance, they are permitted to influence family decisions and openly conduct business in the marketplace. Conventional Muslims, particularly in some Middle Eastern societies, tend to believe it is imperative for women to live near secluded lives and wear a full-body covering when in public to protect their honor and purity. Conversely, many Muslim women in Senegal follow local norms which define modest dress differently. As they age, Senegalese women gain greater respect and authority, both at home and within the community. Despite their social freedom, Senegalese women symbolize family honor (a Muslim custom) and are expected to act with highest *sañse* (honor) and *sutra* (discretion).

Children

Children are assigned duties at an early age. Girls typically care for younger siblings and performing household chores, while boys work as farm laborers. Also, boys are encouraged to seek external social relations within their peer group whereas a girl's social life occurs primarily in the home.

Gender Issues

While Senegal's constitution prohibits sexual discrimination, Senegal remains a male-dominated culture, where a variety of social prejudices work to undermine gender equality.

Inequitable Salaries: In the workplace, men draw regular salaries while many women earn wages as piecework laborers who are paid a certain fee for a production item. This distinction

usually results in lower wages for women. Similarly, women are afforded few if any employment benefits and have limited access to business bank loans. Because men are considered the legal heads of the household, women pay higher taxes than men, while employers pay child allowances only to men.

Female circumcision: Traditionally practiced throughout Africa, female genital mutilation (FGM) remains customary among some Senegalese ethnic groups and affects about 25% of the total female population. This rate is low compared to other African nations – 95% of women in neighboring Mali experience FGM – in large part because the custom is not followed by larger groups such as the Wolof and Serer. Those who practice FGM regard it as a rite-of-passage initiation into adulthood. For members of some ethnic groups, a female who has not been initiated is considered a child, and therefore cannot marry. This type of social stigma pressures her to conform in order to secure a viable future. Traditional FGM practitioners generally lack medical training, sometimes resulting in severe complications or death.

Domestic Violence: Men are not legally prohibited from physically abusing their wives as long as the contact does not cause permanent injury. While abuses occur, few instances are reported, probably because of the wife's financial and social dependence on her husband.

Polygyny: (See *Family & Kinship*).

Other Issues: Other concerns include trafficking of persons, mostly women and children, and prostitution which is legal at age 21 and predominant in urban areas.

Inheritance Laws: Among many African cultures, inheritance traditionally has been a privilege reserved for men. While Senegalese women have a legal right to inheritance, they usually receive little or nothing – a reflection of their forced economic independence, particularly in polygynous households. Property and wealth are passed to the sons, although Islamic law awards daughters half of a son's share.

6. LANGUAGE AND COMMUNICATION

Official Language

While French is the official language used in government, corporations, mass media, and formal education; indigenous Wolof is the national language among a majority of Senegalese (about 75%) and is the native tongue of Senegal's largest ethnic group (see *Political & Social Relations*). Similarly, the other ethnic groups typically use their respective native tongues during everyday conversations, although many speak Wolof as a second language and use it as a unifying language across ethnic boundaries. There are 36 spoken languages in Senegal, most of which belong to the Niger-Congo language family (Africa's largest indigenous language group).

Senegalese indigenous languages are mostly oral rather than written, although contemporary Senegalese have developed a native writing system using a modified form of the Latin alphabet. Similarly, many Muslims typically use the Arabic alphabet to record their ethnic languages.

French is becoming less popular, particularly among the less educated populace who associate it with colonial domination (see *History & Myth*). Only an elite minority who are educated in colonial-style institutions regularly converse in French.

Communication Style

West Africans generally are outgoing and friendly people who enjoy engaging in conversation with acquaintances and strangers alike. Typically patient, they avoid confrontation and display of emotion, especially anger. As in most societies, they commonly express themselves using a variety of both verbal and non-verbal gestures, usually in a calm yet direct manner.

They also have an indirect manner known as "masla" which they use to avoid comments or phrases that could be interpreted as hurtful or demeaning. Senegalese are masters at

disguising disapproval or anguish by responding with vagueness. For example, a host national may "promise" to later reconnect with a new acquaintance as a tactic for dispelling his actual distaste for the person. In this manner, a Senegalese is able to avoid disapproval and possible embarrassment or discontent.

Criticism and Humiliation

Similarly, the concept of constructive criticism is not viewed positively in Senegalese culture, especially in public – if you need to approach an issue critically, it is best to do so privately. Individual criticism in the presence of a person's peers could result in a loss of face – a serious insult to a local national.

Greetings

Senegalese value greetings and neglecting or rushing the welcoming process is considered disrespectful. While a simple "hello" is usually adequate in Western cultures, throughout Africa the greeting process is more elaborate and lengthy.

Senegalese greetings vary depending on familiarity. Shaking hands is common among new acquaintances, while kissing alternate cheeks three times (a French tradition) is common among close friends in urban areas. Rural Senegalese typically only shake hands. Similarly, close acquaintances usually shake each other's hands more vigorously than with a new acquaintance and typically pat each other on the shoulder. In many instances, they continue to hold hands throughout the conversation. It is also common for same-sex friends to walk together holding hands or arm-in-arm.

Cultural traditions also influence greetings. As in many Muslim cultures, members of the opposite sex do not normally shake hands and typically remain publically segregated. In more contemporary urban areas, it is more common for a woman to extend her hand to a male counterpart, particularly in professional settings. Rule of thumb for a deployed US male in this situation: respond in kind with reserve and modesty.

In traditional families, children and women respectfully curtsy to their elders during a greeting. When joining or leaving a small group, it is proper protocol to greet each individual separately using the same approach in both instances. Upon parting, Senegalese usually ask each other to extend best wishes to their families and mutual friends.

Titles

While friends normally converse on a first-name basis, new acquaintances exchange greetings using title and surname (last or family name). When first introducing yourself as a US military member to a host-nation counterpart, it is proper to use rank with first and last name, for example, “Major Shawn Smith.” Thereafter, use rank and last name. When establishing a social relationship with the local people, it is best to wait until invited before using only their first name.

Discussion Topics

After the initial greeting, Senegalese will often inquire about each other’s health, job, or family; thereby spending a few minutes in "small talk.” Asking about family members indicates sincerity and is an important part of the greeting process. For a newcomer, it is considered proper to show interest in your counterpart’s background. Senegalese are proud of their heritage and honored to share their history, which they are known to convey using oral traditions, riddles, and proverbs (see *Language & Communication*).

It is best to avoid discussing potentially sensitive topics such as politics, religion, status, and sex-related themes unless a local national introduces the topic. While some Senegalese are open to addressing some of these subjects, it is difficult to gauge in advance their views about them. Therefore, it is wise for an outsider to withhold judgment or opinion regarding a sensitive topic, particularly as it pertains to Senegalese society.

Friendship

It is important for deployed members to understand that forging relationships is a complex and refined process, and it may

require several visits to gain mutual understanding and trust (see *Political & Social Relations* and *Time & Space*). Senegalese value friendships and honor guests with warm hospitality.

Language Training Resources

Please view the Air Force Culture and Language Center website at http://culture.af.mil/resources/index.aspx for language training resources.

Gestures

- In Muslim societies, the left hand is reserved for hygienic purposes and considered unsanitary in social settings (with Western influence, this restriction is less significant in urban areas).
- Pointing with the index finger is perceived as impolite – it is proper to point with the entire hand.
- Members of different gender, age, or status are usually more reserved when together in public.
- To show respect, it is customary not to establish direct eye contact with an elder, a person of status, or the opposite gender.
  - It is proper to lower one's gaze when speaking.
  - Direct eye contact is proper among members of the same status, gender, or age and friends.
- Traditionally, public display of affection between members of the opposite sex is considered impolite, although some couples do hold hands.
- It is common for same-sex friends to hold hands.
- A person can hail a taxi by raising the right arm.
- To gain another person's attention, it is common to snap one's fingers or make a hissing ("tsss") sound.

Useful Translations

English	French	Wolof
Do you speak English?	Parlez-vous anglais?	Deg nga angale?
Where are you from?	De quell pays êtes-vous?	Fan nga joghe?
I'm from …	Je viens de …	Maa ngi joghe …
Hello	Bonjour	Na nga def
Good-bye	Au revoir	Ba beneen
Good morning	Bonjour	Jaam nga fanane
Good afternoon	Bon après-midi	Jaam nga yendoo
Good night	Bonsoir	Fanaanal ak jam
Welcome	Bienvenu	Teertu
Yes / No	Oui / Non	Waau / Deedeet
OK	OK	Aca
What is your name?	Comment vous apelez-vous?	Naka nga tuda?
My name is__	Je m'appelle __	Maa ngi tudd __
How are you?	Comment vas tu?	Jamun gam?
How is your family?	Comment va la famille?	Naka wa ker ga?
I'm fine	Je vais bien	Jam rek
And you?	Et vous?	Yow nag?
Sorry (forgive me)	Pardon	Baal ma
You are welcome	Je vous en	Agsil ak jam
Please / Thank you	S'il vous plait /Merci	Su la nexee / Jai ruh jef
When?	Quand?	Kañ?
Yesterday	Hier	Déemba
Today	Aujourd'hui	Bii
Tomorrow	Demain	Elaik
Next week	La semaine prochaine	Aybes bu nyew
Later	Plus tard	Kanam
Excuse me	Excusez-moi	Baal ma
I don't understand	Je ne comprends pas	Degguma
Where is the toilet	Ou sont les toilettes?	Ana wonak bi?
What time is it?	Quelle heure est-il?	Ban waxtu mo jot?

7. LEARNING AND KNOWLEDGE

Literacy: Age 15 and over who can read and write

- Total population: 57.7%
- Male: 69.7%
- Female: 46.6% (2015 estimate)

Traditional Education

Prior to the introduction of formal school systems, children were educated at home where they learned a variety of occupational skills devoted to supporting the family unit. Children would become apprentices to their parents or other adult family members. Even today in rural areas, some children remain at home to learn family-related skills and help support the family.

Education System

Senegal's educational system is based on the French model with classes taught in the French language (see *Language & Communication*). Since French typically is not taught or spoken in the home, early childhood education is hampered by this communication barrier. Officials hesitate to replace French with a single indigenous language from fear that most other ethnic groups would resist this change. Similarly, teaching in all the national languages would require new curriculums and teacher retraining. Furthermore, officials consider French as vital to keeping Senegal connected internationally.

Many Muslim children attend *Qur'anic* schools, where they study Islam and learn Arabic. While these schools are not recognized as part of the formal educational system, there is growing interest in formal schools that include *Qur'anic* studies.

Primary and Secondary Education

The public school system provides for 6 years of primary education beginning at age 6, followed by 6 years of secondary education where students start learning English during their first secondary year. During their 3rd year, students have the opportunity to learn an additional foreign language. They also

take a qualification exam to determine if they will continue an additional 3 years of secondary school or pursue a vocational track. In their last year of secondary school, students specialize in either the arts or sciences and take a Baccalaureate exam to determine their qualifications for university attendance.

Attendance

About 73% of all children enter primary school and about 56% complete the program. Enrollment drops sharply in secondary school primarily because many rural residents consider school as irrelevant to their daily activities. Attendance is also affected by the need for children to help support the family and a distrust of secular education, among other factors. The gap between female and male literacy has narrowed in recent years as a result of government campaigns encouraging families to keep their girls in school.

Higher Education

Having an enrollment of about 40,000, Cheikh Anta Diop University, formerly the University of Dakar, offers instruction in the humanities, sciences, business, law, and medicine. Similarly, Gaston Berger University in Saint-Louis offers post-secondary education.

Oral History

Senegalese folk legends historically were the first media used to reinforce moral values and perpetuate traditions, and these legends continue to thrive in rural areas. A unique occupation popular in West Africa (primarily Senegal and Mali) is that of the *griot (géwél* in the Wolof language), which was established during the pre-colonial Mali Empire to entertain the royal household. Known as born musicians and existing on the same social status as craftsmen, *griots* recite history through songs, stories, dances, or poems for their community or clansmen. The town *griot* records memorable events and is therefore responsible for preserving and teaching history. Typically, there is no official salary for the *griot,* although the townspeople usually account for his financial needs.

8. TIME AND SPACE

Concept of Time and Space
Compared to Westerners, Senegalese do not have a strict regard for time management and punctuality and therefore consider people of greater importance than schedules. They regard time as an unlimited resource for conducting human interactions and building relationships. Senegalese are known to be patient and tolerant.

Flexibility: Similarly, Senegalese are flexible when unforeseen circumstances such as no transportation or family illness cause a delay or extended absence. This attitude does not mean they are not committed to their occupations – it just signifies that personal issues take precedence over all other commitments.

Personal Space & Eye Contact: When speaking with a casual acquaintance, Senegalese typically maintain a closer personal space than you may be accustomed to and tend to avoid direct eye contact (see *Language & Communication*). Similarly, it is common for friends of the same sex to touch while conversing.

Space between Friends: Senegalese friends of the same sex are considerably more affectionate with one another and have closer spatial relations. It is normal for them to hold hands or have their arms around each other while walking. These gestures signify friendship and to back away could cause offense. They value friendship, which has great influence on situational outcomes, more-so than in American culture (see "Favoritism below).

Don't Forget Prayer Time: Muslims take time during the workday and on Fridays (Muslim worship day) for prayers, so it is important to plan business appointments accordingly.

Conducting Business
Senegalese prefer to build relationships prior to conducting business. This process helps to clarify the needs of both sides

and facilitates achieving mutually beneficial outcomes. This approach can be time-consuming, so consequently, deployed forces should demonstrate patience, humility, and an interest in local culture in order to foster relationships.

Favoritism

Favoritism in the workplace is customary in West Africa, with people from the same ethnic background or close friends generally promoting each other over outsiders. This practice may be problematic when performance becomes an issue. Should a work-related issue involving a host national occur, the matter should be handled privately and in a non-threatening manner to avoid insulting the individual (see "Criticism and Humiliation in *Language & Communication)*.

Negotiations

- Do not expect immediate decisions – reaching agreement usually requires follow-on discussions about mutual benefits.
- Disagreements should be handled in a calm, diplomatic manner void of emotion.
- Be prepared to bargain product cost (common practice in markets), so it is advisable to initially offer a lower price than you are willing to pay.

Senegalese Work Week

As in Western cultures, the Senegalese work week begins on Monday and ends on Friday. Business hours typically are from 0800-1300 and 1400-1700 but may vary in the summer, particularly in cities, and during the holy month of Ramadan. Some shops are open on Saturday and Sunday mornings.

The Islamic Calendar

The Islamic calendar is used to determine the proper day to celebrate religious holidays and festivals. It is a lunar calendar and contains 12 months, although it is 11 days shorter than the Western or Gregorian calendar. As a result, from one year to the next, Islamic holidays fall 11 days earlier on the Western calendar than the previous year.

9. AESTHETICS AND RECREATION

Overview

A combination of African and European traditions has inspired Senegal's contemporary art and culture. While French influence dominated the societal landscape during and immediately following the 19th-century colonial period, in more modern times a trend favoring the concept of Negritude has emerged. In an effort to dispel French colonial racism, this movement embodies an African cultural renaissance among Black African intellectuals who find solidarity in their common indigenous identity (see below text box on "*The Mbalax Beat*").

Attire

Senegalese citizens value personal appearance and hygiene. Women in particular are known to project an aristocratic demeanor, a tradition that is traced to the famous urban *signares* (18th-century women entrepreneurs) of Saint-Louis and Gorée who established high standards of elegance for future generations of urban women (see *Sex & Gender*).

Both traditional and Western-style clothing are fashionable throughout the country, although revealing apparel is not appropriate in public. For example, men will not be seen shirtless, and few women (with the exception of younger urban females), wear pants. Similarly, shorts are considered inappropriate adult casual wear.

Especially on Fridays (the Muslim holy day) and public holidays, Senegalese are known to wear their traditional *boubou* (long and flowing embroidered robe). For men, the *boubou* is usually full-length and is worn over baggy trousers and a shirt. A woman's *boubou* is similar although more colorful and worn with a wraparound skirt (*pagne*) made of printed cloth with various patterns designed to suit the latest fashions.

Women also wear a matching headscarf (*mussor*), while men commonly wear embroidered hats. Of note, most Muslim women do not normally veil (see *Sex & Gender*). Similarly, both men and women who have completed the traditional Muslim pilgrimage to Saudi Arabia wear white headdresses and are treated with great respect.

While Western wear is more common in urban areas, particularly among young adults, rural residents normally wear a simpler everyday version of the traditional *boubou* with undergarments. Urban youth are known to mix Western and traditional fashions, although older adults tend to wear more traditional clothing (photo courtesy of Wikimedia).

Recreation

Soccer: While wrestling is considered Senegal's national sport, its most popular sport is soccer (as in many African nations), which Africans call football. Of note, Senegal proudly sponsors one of the top national football teams in Africa. Nicknamed the *Lions of Teranga*, the team advanced to the quarterfinals in the 2002 World Cup after beating the defending champion France in the first round. Similarly, Senegal has won the Amiclar Cabral Cup, a regional soccer tournament for West African nations, eight times and is more than any other African nation.

Wrestling: Traditional wrestling is popular throughout Senegal's communities. At the national level, Iba Mar Diop Stadium in Dakar hosts high-stakes professional matches which reward the victors with substantial prizes.

Other Pastimes: Basketball is also popular, with both men's and women's teams competing at the national level. Of note, the US National Basketball Association has drafted a number of Senegalese players such as DeSagana Diop of Dakar who played for the Dallas Mavericks in 2007-8.

Popular recreational sports include offshore diving, sport fishing, hiking, and trekking through a variety of national parks. Senegal also hosts the finish for the Dakar Rally, formerly Paris-Dakar, which is a demanding road race from Europe through the Sahara.

Family and village celebrations and marketplaces provide primary recreation for most rural people. In urban areas, a growing number of people have access to the internet for both business and recreation.

The Arts

In Senegal and throughout Africa, art forms traditionally served a greater purpose – usually ceremonial to impart spiritual power and influence. For example, exquisitely carved wooden masks were used for centuries during ritualistic ceremonies. Masked dancers assumed spiritual identities and ensured departed members safely passed into the spirit world. Today, these artistic masks and other designs are sold as souvenirs in tourist markets and boutiques.

Street art or "streetscapes" depicting everyday life are cast in mural designs on urban buildings and vehicles. Most of these paintings carry a religious theme and relate to a particular Sufi Order (see *Religion & Spirituality*) or an honored Muslim holy man.

Professional studio artists produce paintings and sculptures for international appeal. Renowned painter Iba Ndiaye (pictured, courtesy of Wikimedia) is one of the great leaders of Senegal's Ecole des Beaux Arts (School of Fine Arts) which promoted a 1960s African modernism in visual arts movement. Similarly,

Senegal's renowned sculptor, Ousmane Sow, is famous for his gigantic stone figurines having uncanny lifelike eyes.

Additionally, Senegal has a long tradition of craft-making using popular African media. Crafts include musical instruments, leather works, tapestries, gold and silver jewelry, carvings, and pottery. Likewise, new art forms have emerged such as *souwere* (a French term meaning "under glass") which is a type of glass painting that was exported from North Africa in the early 20th century. The earliest examples embraced themes from Muslim history, while contemporary artists focus more on everyday life, folktales, and nature.

Architecture

Unlike many other societies, West Africa's ancient empires neglected to perpetuate their legacies through monumental architectural designs. What survives in Senegal's contemporary society is a variety of regional housing designs that traditionally were adapted to the environment. Many rural styles were patterned after those found in neighboring Mali and Guinea. Similarly, the Euro-Atlantic tradition of Senegal's coastal settlements links to other European urban areas.

The hallmark of the French Empire in Africa, colonial Dakar exhibits an array of French architectural styles. The islands of Gorée and Saint Louis among other Senegal River settlements depict near mirror images of both French and Portuguese architectural styles (see *History & Myth*). In the North, the *banco* (mudbrick) constructions of the Tukolor ethnic group resemble the famous Sahelian architecture of Mali's Niger Bend (includes the cities of Timbuktu, Mopti, Jenne, Segou, and the Dogon villages). Similarly, Sufi brotherhoods have preserved some of their unique Muslim traditions in architectural mosques and monuments.

Music

Senegalese music is presented in a variety of forms, from traditional village ceremonial dances to African pop tunes, rap,

and hip-hop styles which are popular among Dakar's various nightclubs and in the US (Photo above: *A group of musicians playing traditional instruments*, courtesy of Pro Quest 2011). Many of Senegal's traditional lyrics are composed by village *griots* (see *Learning & Knowledge*), who combine mythical tales with music to entertain and educate the local people. Griots use instruments such as the 21-string *kora* to compose their stories, accompanied by a wooden percussion instrument similar to a xylophone known as a *balaphon*. The kora is also played at festive ceremonies such as weddings and child-naming events. Another popular instrument is the *sabar* (often referred to as the "talking drum").

Senegal has promoted a number of internationally-famed musicians, most notably Youssou N'Dour (pictured, courtesy of Wikimedia) and his Super Etoile de Dakar (Star of Dakar) band who popularized *mbalax* (see text box below). Similarly, the Star Band led by Ibra Kassa is credited with importing popular music from the US and Cuba to Senegal.

The Mbalax Beat

Mbalax music was first composed in the 1970s to help promote President Senghor's concept of Negritude (a renaissance of traditional African culture). Developed by Youssou N'Dour and his Etoile de Dakar (Star of Dakar) band, mbalax initially combined traditional West African sabar drumming with Cuban salsa and rumba beats. Later, US jazz and funk were incorporated, accompanied by the electric guitar, keyboard, and percussion instruments. The steady sound of the "*mbunbmbung*" drumming influenced the name.

Literature

Much of Senegal's pre-colonial history was preserved originally in oral tradition passed through the generations and first recorded in Arabic, the traditional language of Islam and the

Qur'an (See *Language & Communication* and *Learning & Knowledge*). The 18th-century poet Phillis Wheatley, who was brought to the US as a slave from Senegal, was the first African woman to publish her works in the Americas. Her publication "*Poems on Various Subjects, Religious and Moral*" (1773) brought her fame in both England and America – US President George Washington allegedly admired her work. Colonialism brought the introduction of the French language, with a number of French-educated writers producing novels, short stories, and essays on Negritude. Many of these books have been written in English and found in US bookstores.

Among Senegal's leading literary figures is poet and former President Léopold Sédar Senghor whose writings about Negritude rank among the most famous works in Europe. A leading contemporary writer is historian Cheikh Anta Diop, who is world-renowned for his progressive concepts about African history and culture. Similarly, Boubacar Doris Diop, who is the founder of the newspaper *Sol*, wrote *Murambi: The Book of Remains* about the 1994 Rwandan genocide.

Public Holidays

- New Year's Day (January 1)
- Tamxarit (Islamic New Year)*
- Grand Magal Pilgrimage (occurs 48 days after Islamic New Year)*
- Ramadan (Islamic)*
- Korité (End of Ramadan – Islamic)*
- Mouloud (Birthday of the Prophet – Islamic)*
- Good Friday and Easter Sunday (Christian)*
- Whit Monday (Christian Pentecostal)*
- Assumption Day (Christian)
- All Saints' Day (Christian)
- Independence Day (April 4)
- Labor Day (May 1)
- African Community Day (July 14)
- Christmas Day (December 25 – Christian)

*Dates vary based on Muslim Lunar calendar or Christian Gregorian calendar.

10. SUSTENANCE AND HEALTH

Dining Etiquette

Senegalese typically consume three daily meals: breakfast sometime between 6 – 9am; lunch between 1 – 3pm; and dinner after 8pm. It is customary for different genders and age groups to dine separately. Rural families usually eat from communal bowls placed on floor mats or a coffee table. Members dine from the portion of the bowl directly in front of them using their right hand, as the left hand typically is considered unclean and usually not used in social settings (see "Gestures" in *Language & Communication*). In contemporary society, many Senegalese dine using plates and utensils. It is also customary for participants to wash their hands prior to eating, followed by a blessing just before the meal commences.

Diet

While each ethnic group has its own traditional dishes, the Senegalese diet retains notable Portuguese and French influence (see *History & Myth*). Meals usually consist of a main dish containing rice, millet (a local grain), or corn covered with a vegetable and meat sauce (common meats are poultry, fish, beef, and lamb – most Muslims do not eat pork). Senegal's national dish is known as ***thiebou dien*** which is a popular lunch item consisting of a mixture of fish and rice. ***Ceebu Yapp*** is a beef version of thiebou dien. ***Yassa*** (pictured left, courtesy of Wikimedia) is another popular Senegalese dish consisting of rice and

chicken covered with a sauce made from sliced onions and spices.

A traditional Wolof dish is ***mbaxal-u-Saloum*** – a sauce made of ground peanuts, dried fish, meat, tomatoes, and spices served with rice. Because rice is more expensive than other staple foods, it is generally reserved for lunch, which is the daily main meal. Millet is more commonly used for other meals. Popular dessert items are fruit and yogurt.

Beverages: Popular drinks include soft drinks, fruit juice, and tea. Red sorrel (vegetable) leaves are the main ingredients for the local soft drink (*besap*), which also bears the name "Senegalese Red Vine." Other beverages may contain kola nuts, which are known to enhance digestion and also share symbolic values during celebrations (see text box in *Political & Social Relations*).

Tea Ceremony

The traditional tea ceremony (known as *attaya* in Senegal) is popular throughout West African and considered a dignified way to welcome a newcomer or socialize with close friends.

Senegalese customarily brew and drink three glasses of very sweet tea following the evening meal, with the same teabag used to brew all three servings. Each subsequent serving is usually sweeter than the previous one.

Senegalese serve tea by suspending the tea pot high above the cups (the size of shot glasses), allowing the hot tea to flow through the air and form a froth when it reaches the cup. This action also serves to cool the tea for drinking.

Health Issues

Infectious Diseases: Because of poor sanitation and an insufficient potable water supply, infectious and parasitic

diseases are common. These illnesses include meningitis, cholera, tuberculosis, hepatitis, yellow fever, and malaria.

Health Statistics: Senegal has one of Africa's lowest infant mortality rates (average 51.5 deaths per 1,000 live births), although the fertility rate is moderately high – the average woman gives birth to about 4.4 children. The average adult life expectancy is 59.3 for men and 63.4 for women, which is one of the highest rates in West Africa.

HIV/AIDS: While Senegal is among the world's poorest countries, it has managed to contain the HIV/AIDs virus, with less than 1% of the adult population infected with the virus since 1997. Of note, this percentage is among the lowest rates throughout Sub-Saharan Africa.

Inadequate Facilities: Medical facilities are primarily concentrated in urban areas. Consequently, rural healthcare facilities are sparsely located, understaffed, and void of modern equipment and treatment. While urban women normally give birth in hospitals, rural women typically give birth at home with the assistance of a village midwife.

Traditional Practices: Many rural people rely on traditional treatment methods, with local practitioners using a variety of plants and herbs to treat patients. Most families also have their own secret remedies. While in some cases traditional medicine proves effective with fewer side effects than modern drugs, traditional practices usually do not adequately treat the more serious conditions.

11. ECONOMICS AND RESOURCES

Economic Overview

Senegal has one of Africa's most stable economies despite being plagued by corruption, poverty, and unemployment. Its gross domestic product (GDP) is divided among three sectors (2015 estimates): services (59%), industry (24%), and agriculture (17%). Following a robust growth of 4.8% in 2007, real GDP slowed to 2.5% in 2008 and decelerated further to around 1% in 2009 as a result of the global economic crisis. However, Senegal's economy rebounded with a growth rate of 5.8% in 2015. Although Senegal experienced a higher growth rate in 2015, it also experienced a fiscal deficit of 4.6%.

Predominantly rural and having limited natural resources, Senegal earns foreign exchange from fish, phosphates, peanuts, and services. Its economy is highly vulnerable to variations in rainfall and changes in world commodity pricing. As the former capital of French West Africa, Dakar is home to the Central Bank of West African States (pictured, courtesy of Wikimedia) and other institutions which serve all of Francophone West Africa and is a regional shipping and transport hub.

Senegal depends heavily on foreign assistance, which in 2014 represented about $1,203 million of overall government spending. Economic assistance comes largely from France, the International Monetary Fund, the World Bank, and the US. Other contributors include the European Union, the African Development Bank, Canada, Japan, Belgium, and Germany.

The government has implemented structural reforms aimed at enhancing economic growth, improving public sector management, promoting privatization, and reducing poverty. As a result of these reforms, the country has achieved economic stability in recent years.

Services
Employing about 18% of the workforce, Senegal's services sector primarily consists of foreign trade, retail, and banking. Major exports include fish products, peanuts, phosphates, and cotton – the fishing industry is Senegal's leading export market. This sector has attracted a host of foreign investors, with Asian and European companies in particular establishing a foothold in an expanding West African market.

Tourism: Senegal hosts one of African's best developed tourist industries, and one that has been a major economic contributor since its independence in 1960. A notable source of foreign exchange, tourism places less strain on the environment than industry, mining, or agriculture. Primary attractions include luxurious beaches, six nature parks, Dakar's city arts festival (Dak' Art Biennale), its African musical celebration (Festival Mondial des Arts Negres), and the historic Gorée Island (see *History & Myth*).

Currency: Senegal is part of the French Monetary Area whose currency is issued by the *Banque des Etats de l'Afrique de l'Ouest* (Bank of West African States). The unit of currency is the *CFA* (*Communauté Financière Africaine*) *Franc* (commonly referred to as franc), which is guaranteed by the French treasury and also united with the *Euro* currency at a fixed rate. Currencies can be exchanged at banks and exchanges located in urban areas.

The CFA franc has a USD exchange rate of 0.0017 or 1 US dollar equals about 580.5 francs. The franc is divided further into 100 centimes. Senegal's banking system offers ATMs for 24/7 service, although this service is limited in outlying areas. American Express is the most widely used bank card, although Diners Club, MasterCard, and VISA have limited use. Traveler's checks are easy to cash in Dakar, although it is advisable to purchase them in Euros to avoid additional exchange rate charges.

Industry
Employing about 5% of the workforce, Senegal's industrial sector is one of the best developed in French West Africa. Primary industries include peanut oil extraction (accounts for 25% of the total industrial output), phosphate mining, and food processing – fish processing is the key component of Senegal's food industry. Other small-scale manufacturing includes cement, shoes, textiles, chemicals, paper, furniture, and electrical products. Much of the industrial activity occurs in Dakar and its surrounding area.

Natural Resources: Senegal's mining industry is concentrated primarily in the Western region, although zinc, copper, and lead exploratory operations occur in the East. Additionally, the Coastal region contains titanium-rich sand deposits, which yields the mineral zircon used in gem-making. Oil deposits are abundant off the Casamance coast, and natural gas exists near Dakar. Of note, Senegal continues to seek foreign investments to exploit these energy sources. Other deposits include calcium phosphate and limestone.

Agriculture

The majority (more than 75%) of Senegal's labor force is engaged in agriculture even though it accounts for the least GDP. Introduced by colonial powers, peanuts have remained the country's main cash crop and occupy much of the country's cropland. Other agricultural products include millet, corn, sorghum, cassava (a starchy root used to make bread and tapioca), cotton, rice, sugarcane, and beans. Along the coast, farmers cultivate tropical and citrus fruits, squash, okra, eggplant, tomatoes, and peppers. Palm oil, which grows in the wild, is a basic ingredient in West African cuisine. While various types of livestock are plentiful throughout the country, the livestock industry is not a major contributor to the economy.

Geography & Climate (see *Political & Social Relations*).

12. TECHNOLOGY AND MATERIAL

Technology

Concentrated in Dakar, Senegal's manufacturing subsector primarily consists of food processing of goods for the domestic market (See *Economics & Resources*).

Energy Sources

Senegal's electricity is primarily generated through private corporations using diesel and gas engines. Senegal's national electric company, Senelec, purchases power from these independent producers and distributes it to the general population. However, frequent production gaps primarily because of fuel shortages and power outages have hampered Senelec's capability to manage a higher demand from a growing population. To alleviate the shortages, Senegal is seeking cheaper alternatives to diesel fuel, such as coal and bio-fuels.

Similarly, hydropower is an alternative source that has relieved some of the production shortfall. Located on the Bafing River (a tributary of the Senegal River), the Manatali Dam and other hydroelectric sources supply about one-third of the country's electric power. Located in Mali, the dam also services Mali and Mauritania.

Transportation

Roadways: Over 2,000 miles of paved highway connects Senegal's major cities, while another 8,000 miles of secondary roadway (mostly unpaved) links smaller villages. Efforts are underway to extend and improve Senegal's roadways, although much of the materials needed to modernize the system are unavailable. Consequently, construction teams are known to adapt existing materials such as seashells, sand, and soil mixed with oil and chemical stabilizers to road surfaces.

Of note, many people do not own cars and therefore travel by public transport such as buses and taxis or a minivan system for longer distances. The famous ***Car Rapide*** (pictured) is Senegal's most common public transportation mode (photo a courtesy of Wikimedia). Similarly, horses and carts, bicycles, and motorcycles are customary transportation vehicles.

Railroads: Dakar is connected internally and externally through about 700 miles of railway. At Thiès, which is located in the vicinity of Dakar, the rail line diverges with one line heading for the northern port city of Saint-Louis and the other to cities in Mali. Known as the Dakar-Niger Railway, the second line connects Dakar and the Atlantic coast to the Niger River at Koulikoro, Mali.

Waterways: Senegal has about 620 miles of navigable waterways primarily via the Senegal and Casmance rivers and the Saloum tidal inlet. Dakar is one of West Africa's largest deep-water seaports, which provides for uninterruptable access to the port. Located on African's westernmost point, Dakar port functions as a crossroad for major sea lanes connecting Europe to the Americas.

Civil Aviation and Airports: In 1939 Air France began to provide domestic air service throughout French West Africa. After gaining their independence, 11 West African nations formed a jointly-owned airline, Air Afrique (photo a courtesy of Wikimedia), which today serves as a major link between West and Central Africa and connects Dakar with Europe and the US via the Dakar-Yoff International Airport. Similarly, Air Senegal International is the country's flag carrier.

Telecommunications
While the constitution guarantees media freedom, it also prohibits the dissemination of "false news" or reports that discredit the government.

Telephone: Through microwave and fiber-optic technology, Senegal's national phone service, Sonatel, provides cellular connectivity to even the remotest locations and abroad. Landline connectivity also remains available.

Internet: Sonatel also offers internet service, although there are also about 700 private providers and 500 World Wide Web hosts. This private service offers public information access to a wider audience.

Radio & Television: State-owned Radiodiffusion Television Senegalaise (RTS) operates two television stations, although a few privately-owned satellite subscription channels are available. These private channels usually broadcast foreign programming and very little if any local news. RTS also operates a national radio network which broadcasts in French and in the primary native languages. Dakar's international radio station broadcasts in French, English, and Portuguese.

Print Media: Senegal has about 20 daily newspapers, most residing in Dakar. There are 4 primary newspapers, all printed in French, with *Le Soleil* (The Sun) usually providing an official government perspective to the news.

Environmental Issues
Senegal's major environmental concerns include desertification, deforestation, soil erosion, drought, excessive flooding in lowland areas, and shortages of potable water. Poaching and excessive exportation of wildlife are also serious concerns. The government has reserved about 10% of the country's landscape for the conservation and protection of its bio-diversity.

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